WHEN **ZAPPA** SHUT UP 'N STOPPED PLAYING GUITAR!

GUITAR WORLD

GUITAR & BASS
TRANSCRIPTIONS

NITA STRAUSS
DEAD INSIDE

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
SOUL TO SQUEEZE

THE BEATLES
COME TOGETHER

*ONE NEW ALBUM, TWO SURGERIES AND **THIS** CRAZY TRIPLE-NECK GUITAR!*

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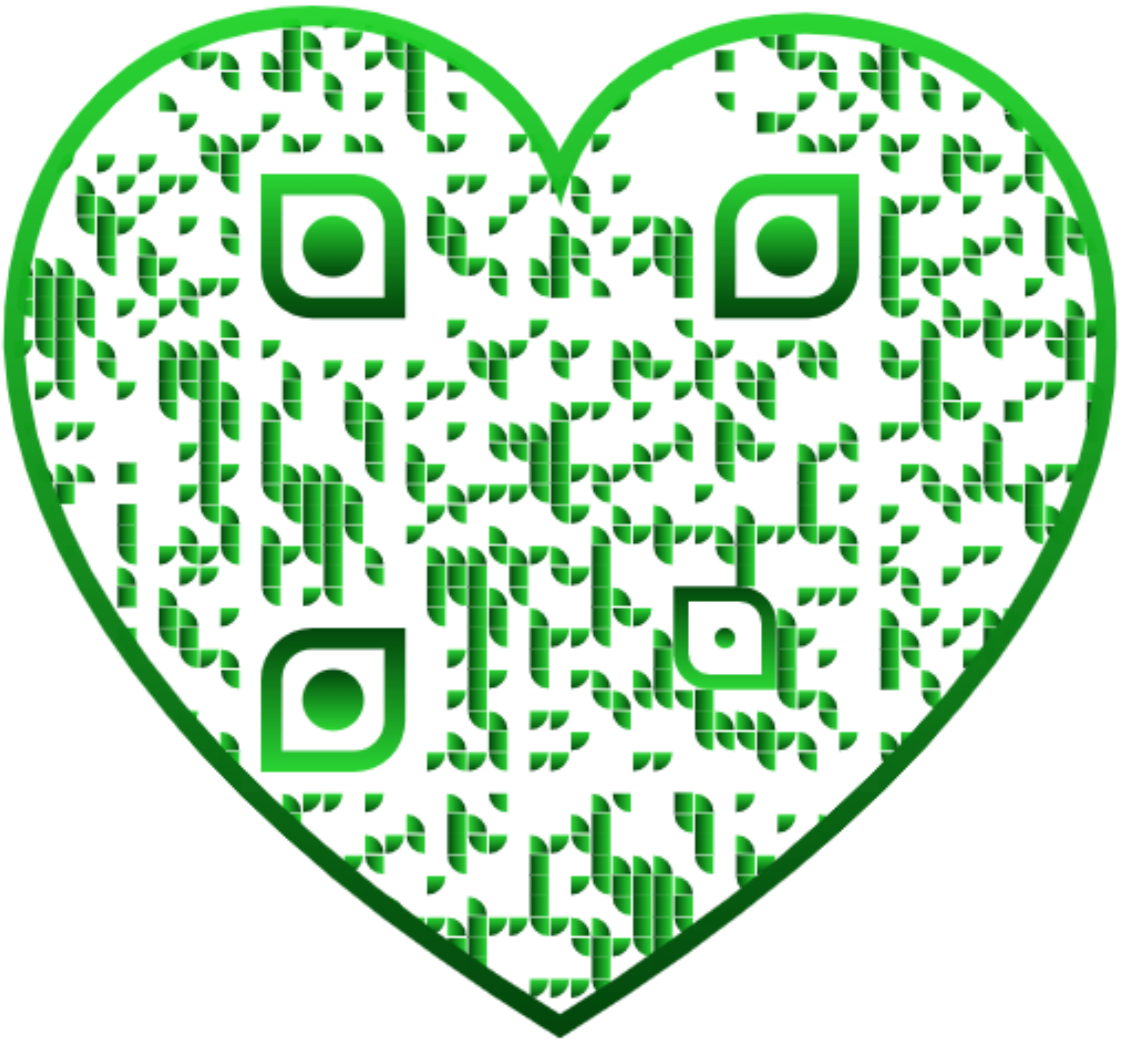
MEET **COBRA KAI'S** GUITAR GUYS

WARREN HAYNES GETS THE BLUES

ALEX LIFESON'S NEW SIGNATURE AXE

FUTURE

BUDGET METAL GEAR | B.B. KING TONE SECRETS & MORE



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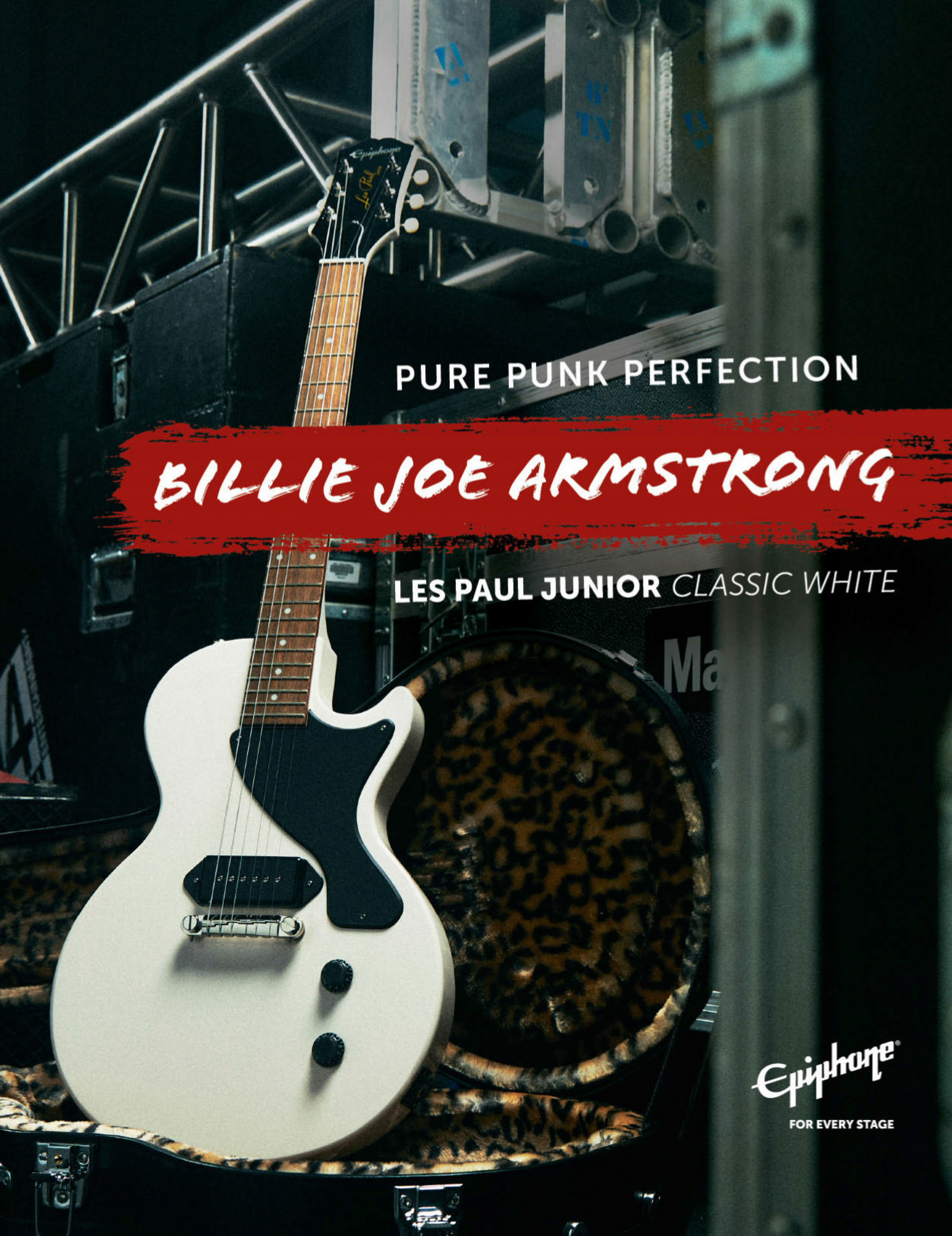
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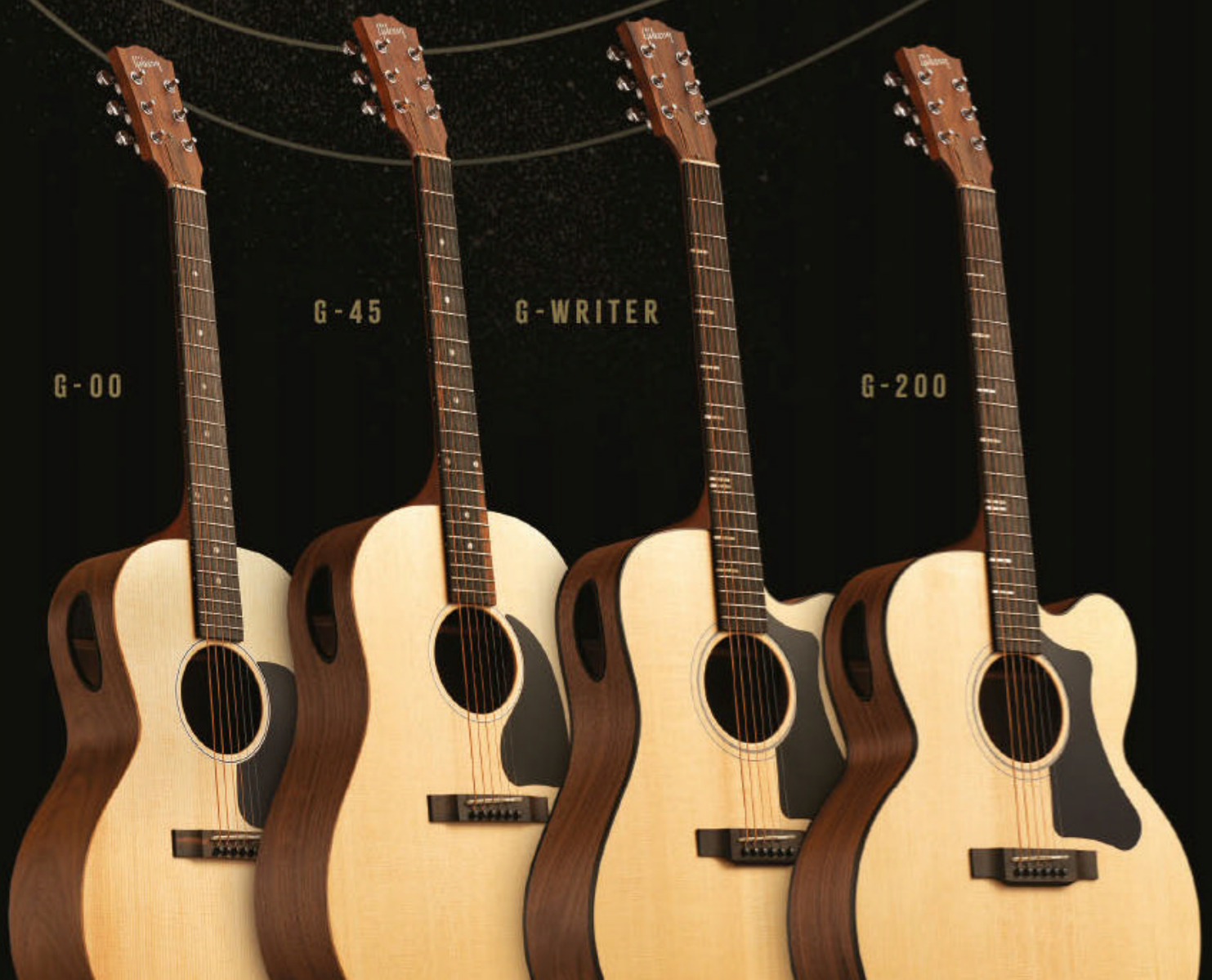
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How the composers on Netflix's *Cobra Kai* craft the show's perfect — and/or badass — Eighties-style score, plus an interview with series star (and guitarist) **William Zabka**

"I always toyed with the idea of writing a song with just one hand," Steve Vai says. "Lo and behold, I was put in a situation where it was either do that or do nothing"

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LARRY DIMARZIO

COVER PHOTO: LARRY DIMARZIO

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BACK TO SCHOOL SEASON

I'M REALLY HAPPY to have snagged William Zabka — aka Johnny Lawrence from *The Karate Kid* and *Cobra Kai* — for this issue of *Guitar World*. Sure, I enjoy the hell out of *Cobra Kai*, but Zabka also happens to appear in my favorite Eighties movie (and one of my four or five favorite movies of all time), 1986's *Back to School*. Ironically, *Back to School* is the movie I'd watch when I'd cut class — or cut school altogether — back in ancient times, and I watch it about three times a year to make sure I can still recite the dialog — just like a crazy person — and I can! In terms of our feature, I actually considered interviewing Zabka myself, just so I could ask him to say, "Screw you, Fanelli!" (He says, "Screw you, Melon!" to Jason Melon — played by Keith Gordon — in the movie), but I'm pretty sure Richard Bienstock did a much better job than I would've done. Come to think of it, I'd also ask him: Why is Grand Lakes University hosting diving practice between semesters? Why are all the characters dressed in fall or winter coats, except for in the diving scenes, where it's suddenly warm and sunny? How could Buzzy the contractor enlarge, redesign, paint, spackle and re-decorate the Melon/Lutz dorm room in just a few hours? Yeah, it's probably better that Bienstock did the interview...

SHUT UP 'N WRITE YER HEADLINES: As you make your way through this issue, you might notice that the headlines on two features — Frank Zappa and Steve Vai — make obvious references to *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar*, Zappa's 1981 live album. Hopefully you'll understand *why* when you read both stories, although I don't want to give away any spoilers here on silly ol' page 14. What isn't mentioned, however, is the fact that Vai's guitar work is all over that classic Zappa album, so it was an obvious tie-in. (To me, anyway!) Yeah, I normally don't discuss *GW* headlines (It doesn't make for the most colorful reading, you see), but it needed to be mentioned. As always, here's hoping you enjoy this issue of *GW*!

DAMIAN FANELLI
Editor-in-Chief

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"The decade that could've been"

It was interesting to read how wildly different and disparate something like "the Eighties" means to people [*"John Mayer's Eighties Fantasy," October 2021*]. I guess I just never identified the bulk of that decade so much along the lines of being a pink and sea-green *Miami Vice* motif merged with a heavily synth-driven / drum-machine-augmented vehicle for songcraft as opposed to probably the more common conception of its being — for close to a solid half of its duration — the hair metal decade.

But as Mayer rightly points out, a person's outlook is often going to be age-specific. As a person born in 1962 and whose first professional band began playing out live, coincidentally, in 1980, my own take on "the Eighties" can be stated thusly: It started out as having the chance to be one of the greatest eras in hard rock/metal history... Michael Schenker's solo-group debut album ushering in the decade was nearly flawless; it soon looked even better with the one-two punch of those seminal Randy Rhoads offerings in the spring and fall of 1981. There was the excellence of Queensryche, circa '83-'84, with their self-released EP and the epic early masterpiece "Roads to Madness" from their first full-length; also, there was the crushing power, the sheer brutality of Manowar's 1984 output, *Hail to England* and *Sign of the Hammer*.

(And then, well, other things happened.)

Yes, [*that's*] a totally different take on what the Eighties — or at least its first half or so — meant, no? For me, it was "the decade that could've been."

— Lance Abbring

The small but intriguing Pignose

One piece of equipment I've never bought or owned, but that I feel I have heard of for a long time, is the Pignose miniature amp. I've read that it's not just for practicing, but also for warming up a valve amplifier.

As I recall, the Pignose's power source is six AA batteries. I think it's interesting that (if I'm correct) the Pignose has a "Line out" but not a "Headphone out." I guess this has long been meant to reduce the chance of a headphone out being used where it should not be used. I know it's a lot stronger than the line out and should be used only for headphones.

However, with some transistor radios, the headphone cord can function as the antenna meant to receive an FM broadcast band. Yes, I did just get off the subject. Elderly Instruments said in their catalog that, "You can get your buddy to open and close the Pignose while you're practicing to modify tone."

— Samuel G. Mardock

More than a cuppa Joe, please!

I wonder why no one has done a comprehensive profile... at least in some time... of one of the USA's most original, interesting and dedicated guitarists, Joe Perry. I don't mean a standard view of the career, or the elevator, per se... but a nuts-and-bolts analysis on his influences and their specific impact on his sound and approach, his endless tone search and how that has manifest over the years, the methods and hours spent fishing his mental waters looking for the hooks that led to the songs... You know, something interesting. He's still at it, tinkering with amps and gadgets and hunting for that voice and writing those cool things... even through the pandemic. Doesn't have to be *The English Patient* or *War and Peace* length, but he is really interesting. And unique. And influential. And... and... and..., etc.

— Paul Santow

DEFENDERS *of the Faith*

Dave Dillard

AGE: 60
HOMETOWN: Carrollton, TX
GUITARS: Nash S63 Strat, 1990s Mexi Strat (signed by Robin Trower), Epiphone Pro Les Paul
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Frank Marino "Midnight Highway," Robin Trower "Little Bit of Sympathy" and originals
GEAR I WANT MOST: Marshall 2x12 cabinet with Vintage 30's

Justin Fleming

AGE: 42
HOMETOWN: Jacksonville, FL
GUITARS: Dean Dime DOF, Dean Thoroughbred, Ibanez RG Series
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Megadeth "Peace Sells," Pantera "Domination"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Washburn Dime Southern Cross

Jason Gerber

AGE: 40
HOMETOWN: Brooklyn, NY
GUITARS: Fender Squier Strat, Ibanez RX20, Fender Standard Strat
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Nirvana "Lounge Act," Nirvana "About a Girl," Ramones "Blitzkrieg Bop" and originals
GEAR I WANT MOST: Fender Jazzmaster, EVH MXR Phase 90, Orange Crush amp, Taylor acoustic

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OF THE MONTH

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FRANK ZAPPA BY BRANDON ST.ONGE

PRINCE BY JAYSON STORM

Matt Karis

AGE: 51
HOMETOWN: Los Angeles, CA
GUITARS: LP '57 Gold Top reissue, ES-275 and 335, PRS Custom 24 and Silver Sky, Fender EJ Strat and Troublemaker Tele
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Audioslave "Cochise," David Bowie "Suffragette City," the Rolling Stones "Angie"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Les Paul Special TV Yellow

Mark Smith

AGE: 69
HOMETOWN: Plano, TX
GUITARS: 2015 Gibson Les Paul Studio, Epiphone Joe Bonamassa 1960 Les Paul Norm Burst, 2017 Fender Jimi Hendrix Monterey Strat, 1983 Gibson SG, 1971 Yamaha FG-230 12-string, 2015 Yamaha FG730s six-string
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Phil Collins "In the Air Tonight," Joe Bonamassa "Drive," Jimi Hendrix "Hey Joe," Etta James "I'll Take Care of You," Cream "Sunshine of Your Love," Spirit "Nature's Way"
GEAR I WANT MOST: 1957 Les Paul Goldtop reissue

Hera Andre-Bergmann

AGE: 26
HOMETOWN: New York, NY
GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul Standard 50s, Epiphone Les Paul Custom Pro, Gibson Les Paul BFG P90, Fender Player Series Stratocaster, Fender Player Series Telecaster, Ibanez S420, Epiphone Lzzy Hale Explorer, Fender Standard HSS Stratocaster, Ibanez AEG10E-BK-2Y-01
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Emily Wolfe "Heat of the Moment," Black Sabbath "Into the Void," Heart "Barracuda," the Runaways "Wasted" and originals
GEAR I WANT MOST: Black and Gold Gibson Les Paul Custom and a Shell Pink Fender American Original '60s Stratocaster

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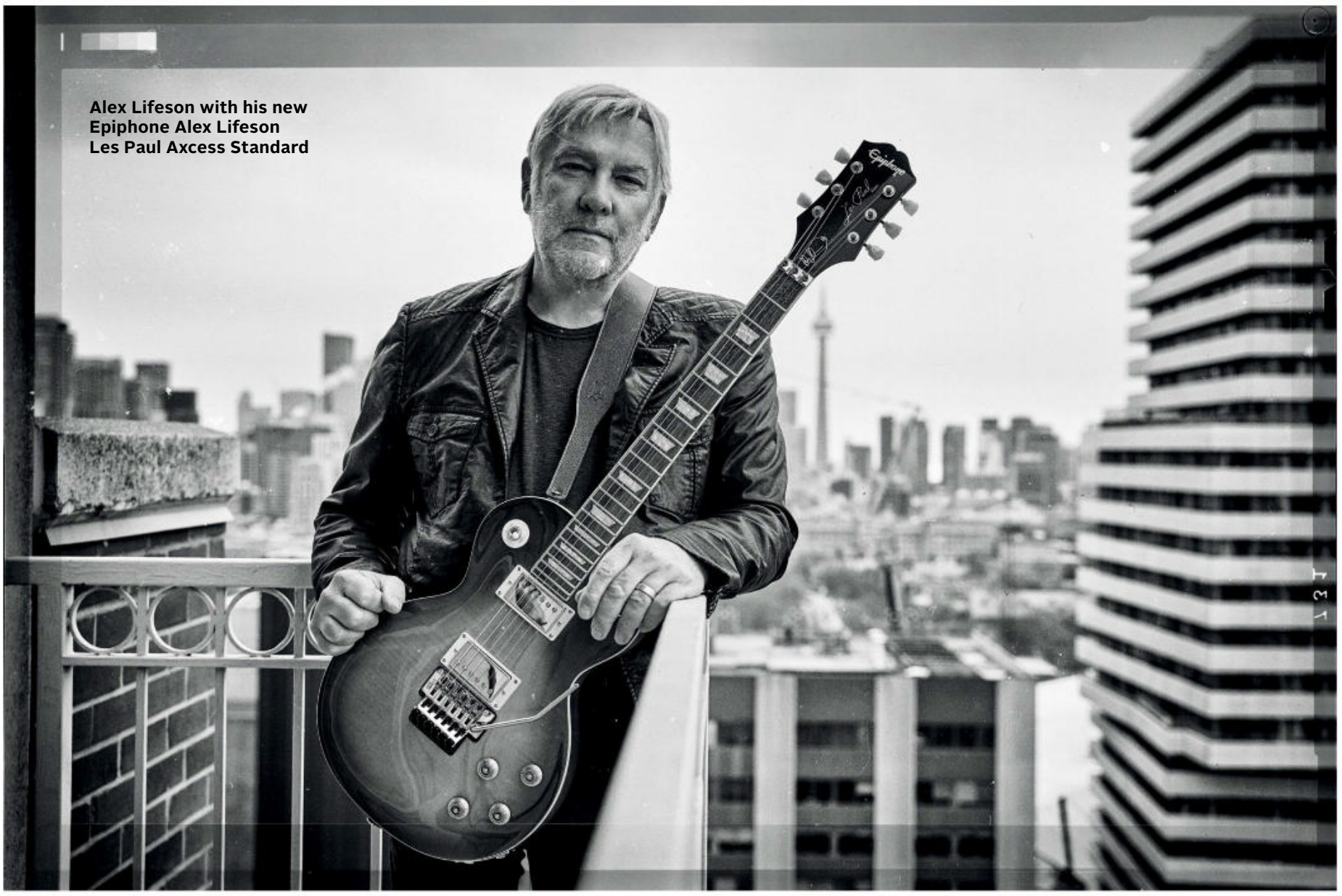

Alex Lifeson with his new Epiphone Alex Lifeson Les Paul Axcess Standard

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RUSH LEGEND ALEX LIFESON DISCUSSES HIS NEW EPIPHONE AXCESS LES PAUL, A PAIR OF NEW TUNES, NEW COLLABORATIONS AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF TEAMING UP WITH GEDDY LEE

By Richard Bienstock

ACROSS FIVE DECADES with Rush, Alex Lifeson put his own unique spin on the role of the electric guitar in the power trio format, imbuing his band's compositions with twisted riffs, colorful extended chords, ringing arpeggios, wild whammy bar squiggles, sticky pop melodies and all manner of proggy excursions. So it's not surprising that when he teamed up with Gibson roughly a decade ago to design his own signature guitar, the result — the Alex Lifeson Les Paul Axcess — was, like the man himself, a distinctive take on a tried-and-true classic.

"I didn't want to just get my name plastered on a guitar model and then sell it based on that," Lifeson tells *Guitar World*. "I really wanted to create something that was an instrument I would want to buy and own and play."

The Axcess was indeed that instrument. And now Lifeson has collaborated on an Epiphone version of the guitar, bringing its unique feature set to a model that we can all buy and own and play.

"My biggest concern was, can we get Custom Shop quality, but in a guitar that costs quite a bit less?," Lifeson says. "And I think we did it."

It would appear that they did. The new Epiphone Alex Lifeson Les Paul Axcess Standard boasts classic Les Paul features, including a mahogany body, a carved maple top and a mahogany neck. There's also an Epiphone Ceramic Pro humbucker in the neck position and an Epiphone Pro-

"My biggest concern was, can we get Custom Shop quality, but in a guitar that costs quite a bit less?"

Bucker 3 at the bridge, providing classic LP tones, and it's all wrapped up in "traditional," to use Lifeson's word, Viceroy Brown finish.

From there, the Axcess is jam-packed with updated and highly specialized features. Push-pull coil-splitting options on the individual pickup volume controls provide for a wide range of humbucker and single-coil tones, while the Graph Tech Ghost Floyd Rose system allows for some very un-les-Paul-like whammy work and the Ghost piezo bridge saddles offer up impressively realistic acoustic sounds. What's more, acoustic and magnetic voices can be blended to create a richly layered sound, and then routed through either a traditional mono jack or via two cables to split the individual magnetic and piezo outputs.

The piezo, Lifeson says, "is a big move that was very specific to me with Rush, because I wanted to be able to have something that was more acoustic sounding that I could either blend in or feature on its own, without having to have the acoustic on a stand and then go back and forth with the electric."

Regarding Rush songs where the Ghost system came in particularly handy, Lifeson says that "one example is 'Camera Eye,' from *Moving Pictures*. When we would play that live I would use the piezo because the verses have acoustic in them. And then I would blend the acoustic in as well on 'Natural Science' [*from* Permanent Waves], because that has a lot of very clean arpeggios."

He continues, "I would use the vibrato arm on so many things, and the coil splits were really handy because I liked that combination I had on some of my earlier modified Strats, where I had two single coils with a humbucker in the back. I always missed having the ability to have so many clean sounds, and certainly having these coil splits really provides that."

An update on the Epiphone version of the Axcess is the guitar's neck shape, which is identified as the "Lifeson profile." What, exactly, does this mean? "I would call it a 'moderate radius,' Lifeson says. "Not too chunky, but not too thin. For example, my '76 ES-335 has the thinnest neck in the world. But then my '58 Les Paul had quite a chunky neck, which is a little too big for me. So I wanted something sort of in the middle, with really nice playability. And then Epiphone sculpted the neck-to-body joint so that you can get up on those frets comfortably without having to twist your hand to get into the high notes. So it's just a really comfortable neck. And overall, the quality on this guitar is great — it's well-built, it sounds good and the playability is great."

Lifeson laughs. "I had the prototype here for a couple of weeks and I was bashing it around, trying to wreck it as much as I could. And I was really, really happy and quite impressed with what Epiphone were able to build. It's really a terrific instrument."

That instrument, it's worth noting, is not the only new thing in Lifeson's orbit these days. While the guitarist retreated from the public eye following the tragic death of Rush drummer Neil Peart, who passed away in January 2020 at age 67 after a long battle with glioblastoma, he recently unveiled two new instrumental songs, "Kabul Blues" and "Spy House," to coincide with the advertising campaign for the launch of the Epiphone Les Paul Axcess.

"I wanted to use some background music along with the launch, and I gravitated to those two pieces," Lifeson says. "The songs are quite different from each other — 'Kabul Blues' is a little darker, more mysterious, while 'Spy House' is more in-your-face and rocking — but the tempos seemed to fit what I was creating visually. Then Gibson wanted to make the songs available, so we thought it'd be a good idea to put them on my newly created website, which I'd like to use as a vehicle to keep adding some more live music and recorded music that I've been doing for the last 30 years."

The instrumentals are just the beginning of more new music to come. Lifeson recently revealed he has been working with a new band, Envy of None, which also includes longtime friend Andy Curran — best known as the bassist and singer for Canadian rockers Coney Hatch — and 24-year-old Portland, Oregon-based vocalist Maiah Wynne. An album of original songs is in the works (reportedly, "Kabul Blues" and "Spy House" will be a part of the project), and the material will potentially be unlike anything we've heard from Lifeson previously.

"There's lots of straight-ahead guitar, but there's also mandola and lots of manipulated, sequenced things," he says. "And I've really become an aficionado of backwards guitar as well. So there's everything from acoustic fingerstyle stuff to really heavy stuff, trippy kind of backwards things to Hendrix-y melodic parts. I'm really quite pleased with it. We have 10 songs and they're all sounding really, really cool."

As for making new music with his Rush band mate, Geddy Lee, one of these days, Lifeson says the door is always open, though neither of them are planning to walk through it any time soon.

"We're not putting any pressure on it or anything," Lifeson says. "We had a lot of good years together and we still love each other very much. I talk to Geddy every other day — we're best friends. There's more to our life together than just writing music. So if it happens, it happens. And it'll happen when it happens."

Buffalo Nichols

FOLK-BLUES ARTIST DIGS DEEP ON HIS FAT POSSUM DEBUT

By Jim Beaugez

THE PLAINTIVE HOWL and ominous, minor-key blues played by Skip James has more in common with the apocalyptic worldview of grindcore bands like Napalm Death than you might think, at least for 30-year-old Austin folk-blues artist Carl "Buffalo" Nichols.

"As a teenager, I was really more into metal and punk than I was into the blues," Nichols says of his upbringing in Milwaukee. "Skip James always felt, like, heavy and haunting, [*and*] I connected with metal in that same way."

All the time he spent spinning CDs by Son House, Keb' Mo' and James from his mom's record collection finally caught up with him in his early 20s. Inspired by those American bluemen and West African guitarists like Ali Farka Touré, he set aside his ESP LTD MH shred machine, picked up a Recording King resonator and a slide and developed his rhythmic approach to fingerstyle guitar playing.

"I just used what I knew from there and applied it to what I was hearing on the blues records," he says. "A lot of it matched up and seems, not the same techniques, but once you learn that stuff, everything else, even the separation of the thumb and the finger, it all comes together."

Nichols spends a lot of time in D minor, the tuning used by Bentonia, Mississippi, blues artists like James, Jack Owens and Jimmy "Duck" Holmes, as well as Adia Victoria — a decidedly different take on the genre than the Chicago style played around Milwaukee when he was growing up. Only one song on his 2021 self-titled Fat Possum debut, "These Things," is played in standard tuning.

Buffalo Nichols with his Recording King Tricone Resonator

"Skip James always felt, like, heavy and haunting, [*and*] I connected with metal in that same way"

While recording the album, Nichols kept his approach to gear straightforward. He mounted a Lace pickup on his Recording King Tricone Resonator and ran it through a Fender Twin Reverb for many of the tracks, and balanced it with a sustainable-wood Gibson B45 and Blue Ridge acoustics. He recently picked up a Mavis Mule solid-body resonator to play live, where he's been supporting Drive-By Truckers and others, in addition to playing his own shows.

"I've been on this journey for half my life, trying to come to terms with the blues as a genre and trying to understand it and what it means to me," he says. "What I'm aiming for is to just keep the essence of that music without falling into clichés and nostalgia. That's always on my mind. I think that will be a lifetime struggle. But, you know, it's fun."

MERRICK ALES

"I really felt I needed to do a heavy, guitar-oriented album again," Arjen Lucassen says. "You know, that's in my blood"

Star One

THE PROG-METALLERS' NEW ALBUM, *REVEL IN TIME*, FINDS ARJEN LUCASSEN — AND A HOST OF GUITAR HEROES — GOING ABSOLUTELY SUPERNOVA

By Gregory Adams

AYREON'S EPIC 2020 album, *Transitus*, left Dutch guitarist Arjen Lucassen completely spent. Understandably so — It was an elaborate, 27-song rock opera that sometimes leaned on fanciful woodwinds and brass more so than Lucassen's prog-spiced riffery. After completing the project, he was determined to ramp his guitar back up in the red with his decidedly chunkier prog-metal outlet, Star One.

"I really felt I needed to do a heavy, guitar-oriented album again. You know, that's in my blood," Lucassen says. "It's much easier for me to grab the guitar, plug in and come up with 20 riffs than to make a whole rock opera with all these different moods and instruments."

That's not to say *Revel in Time* is comparatively one-dimensional. Though not locked into an overarching narrative, it's an equally ambitious outing that finds Lucassen taking inspiration from time travel-themed sci-fi flicks. Opener "Fate of Man," for instance, is a wormhole-riding ripper that pairs Lucassen's pace-quickening pull-off motifs with the plotline from *The Terminator*; Symphony X's Michael Romeo also stops by to bend the space-time continuum with a molten blur of sweeps and agile tapping.

> **"He actually made me cry when he sent me that solo"**
>
> *— ARJEN LUCASSEN*

Romeo's not the only guest soloist present, with leads across Star One's latest also coming from Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal, Whitesnake's Adrian Vandenberg, Steve Vai and more. Complimenting the album's era-hopping theme, "28 Days (Till the End of Time)" also ties Lucassen's past and present together via the inclusion of guest shredder Timo Somers.

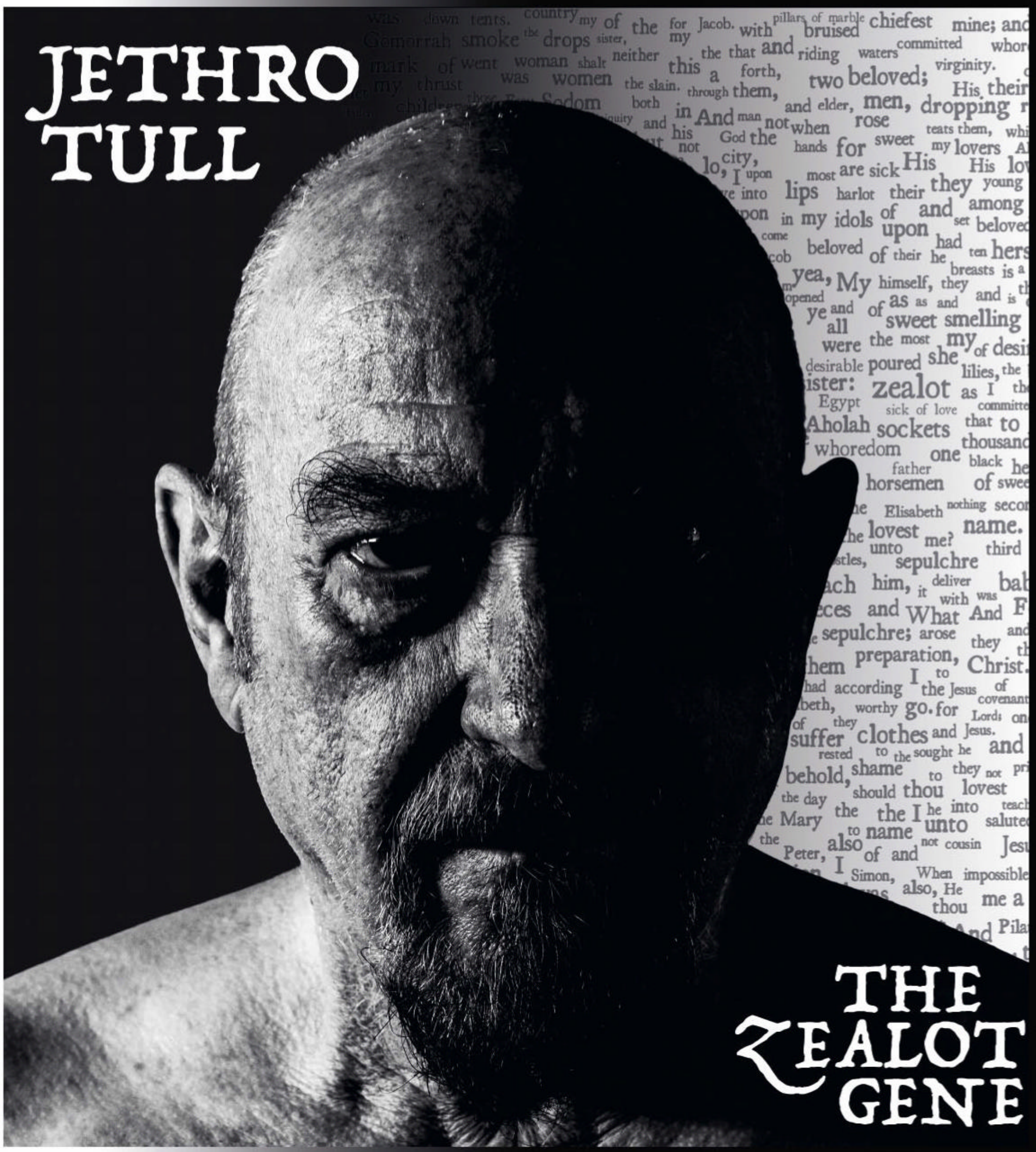
"I actually played with his father [*the late Jan Somers*] in the Eighties in the hard rock band Vengeance," Lucassen says, gushing over the younger guitarist's performance, "It's that rare combination of power, aggression and melody. It's not mindless shredding; it's very tasteful. He actually made me cry when he sent me that solo."

While Lucassen's own playing laser beams from limberly picked, meter-shifting sublimity ("Prescient"), toward drop A-damaged grooves ("A Hand on the Clock") and onto Rainbow-modeled power rock ("Back from the Past"), he was happy to mostly secede from soloing.

"I have so many great guitar players on this album that there was not much space for myself. There's just one solo of mine in there, in the track 'Beyond the Edge of it All,'" Lucassen says, adding that while he cut the bulk of the record using a seven-string Ibanez RG, he used a Strat for his lone, dive-warped lead. "I always play my solos on a Fender. It's more specific. It goes back to Ritchie Blackmore, Hendrix — the typical single-coil Stratocaster sound. Also, I've got the Shift 2001 tremolo on that [*Strat*]; I love that thing."

RIK BAUTERS

JETHRO TULL



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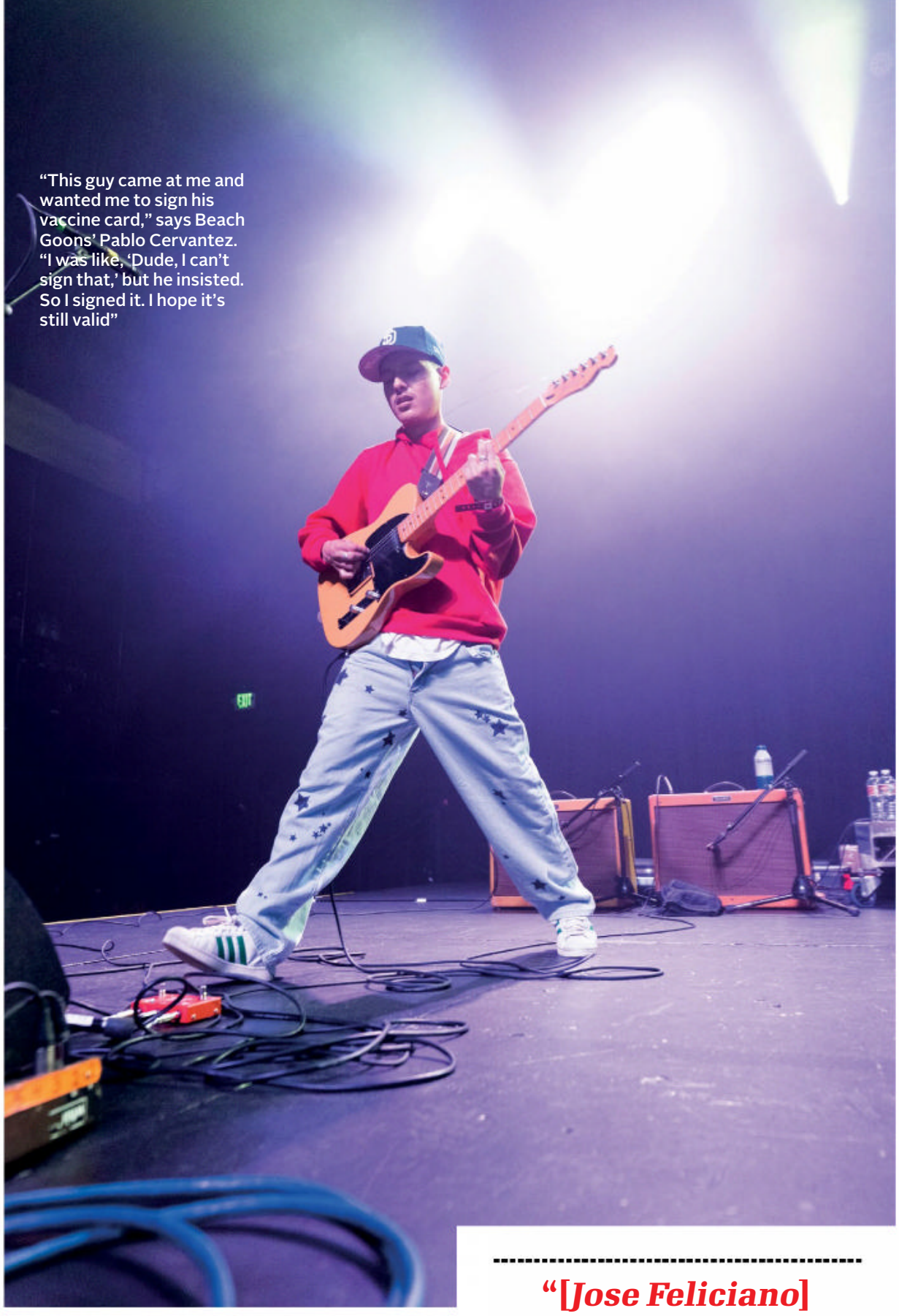


"This guy came at me and wanted me to sign his vaccine card," says Beach Goons' Pablo Cervantez. "I was like, 'Dude, I can't sign that,' but he insisted. So I signed it. I hope it's still valid"

NETO VALASCO

Beach Goons

GUITARIST PABLO CERVANTEZ ON STIRRING UP HYSTERIA — AND LO-FI MASTERPIECES — WITH HIS SAN DIEGO-BASED SURF PUNK TRIO

By Joe Bosso

BEACH GOONS GUITARIST and frontman Pablo Cervantez admits that his fans are a fervent lot, often rushing the stage and besieging him for autographs and selfies before the band can begin playing. But even he was surprised by one fan at a recent gig. "This guy came at me and wanted me to sign his vaccine card," Cervantez says. "I was like, 'Dude, I can't sign that,' but he insisted. So I signed it. I hope it's still valid."

Since starting up the San Diego-based surf punk trio in 2004, Cervantez has become accustomed to seeing bassists and drummers come and go. "Sometimes we have creative differences, and other times the other guys decide they want to do their own things," he says. Recently, he took on two new members, but he demurs when asked to divulge their names, saying simply, "We'll see how things go. Right now, things are cool."

Cervantez's playing style is supercharged stuff. On Beach Goons lo-fi gems such as "A.M." and "Tar," he peppers bracing, action-packed rhythms with dreamy, understated lead melodies. Although he cites Jose Feliciano as his biggest influence ("He's untouchable for flamenco, but he's an amazing rock guitarist, too"), he also draws inspiration from bands as disparate as the Cure, Blink-182 and the Cardigans. "I like to play with power and passion, but I try to throw some light touches in there as well. On record I try to show off some nuances, but live it's all about rocking out."

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Fender Players Series Telecaster, Fender Mustang
- **AMP** Fender Blues Deluxe reissue
- **EFFECTS** Boss VB-2W Vibrato

"[*Jose Feliciano*] is untouchable for flamenco, but he's an amazing rock guitarist, too"

— PABLO CERVANTEZ

The group just came off a whirlwind cross-country tour, and Cervantez reports that they've begun work on a new album, their first since 2018's *hoodratscumbags*. "It's a little early to really say what kind of album it's going to be," he says. "I could say we're maturing, but it's still going to sound like what the fans love. I want the band to evolve a little more, but I've still got to perform the songs live. Between singing and playing, I do a lot of heavy lifting on stage, so whenever I write a song I have to keep that in mind."

[*from left*] Dan Hawkins, Justin Hawkins and Rufus Taylor of the Darkness perform in New Orleans, April 30, 2018

The Darkness

GUITARISTS DAN AND JUSTIN HAWKINS TALK *MOTORHEART*, A RIFF-ROCKING NEW RECORD THAT'S DEDICATED TO HAVING FUN — AND, OF COURSE, SEX ROBOTS

By Richard Bienstock

"We just see how far we can get before it goes flying off the edge of the cliff"

— JUSTIN HAWKINS

LET'S GET ONE thing out of the way: Yes, the Darkness wrote and recorded their new full-length album, *Motorheart*, during the dark days of the global pandemic. But don't expect it to be their introspective, Taylor-Swift-in-a-cabin-in-the-woods record.

"We figured we're going to come out of the pandemic one of these days, and when we do, we're going to be playing this record live," guitarist Dan Hawkins says. "And people aren't going to want to go out there and listen to us going, 'Oh, woe is me.' When they're finally allowed to have a good time, they're gonna want to have a good time. So we didn't want to end up with an album that was maudlin."

"There shouldn't be anything on there that makes you weep," frontman Justin Hawkins adds. "Although, you know, guitar solos, they make me cry when I hear them, but not in exactly the same way."

And so, dear reader, the Darkness present *Motorheart*, a nine-song, non-weepy opus resplendent with raging riff-rock ("It's Love, Jim"), rampaging metal ("Nobody Can See Me Cry"), AC/DC-esque fist-pumpers ("The Power and Glory of Love"), sticky power-pop nuggets ("Jussy's Girl"), Thin Lizzy-like bangers ("Eastbound") and, of course, the pomp-y, proggy title track, a gloriously over-the-top epic about — what else? — a sex robot. "And what's more soothing than listening to a bloke go on about a robot?," Dan asks.

Despite lockdown, the Darkness, which also includes bassist Frankie Poullain and drummer Rufus Taylor, managed to work fast, with Dan and Rufus hammering out song ideas at the guitarist's home studio in England, and then sending them over to Justin in Switzerland, who added vocals, melodies and, eventually, solos. As for how he handles the guitar leads, Justin says there's a lot of improv involved. "We just see how far we can get before it goes flying off the edge of the cliff."

Dan, meanwhile, is content to stick to rhythm work, characterizing himself as the Malcolm Young of the operation. "I steer Justin toward being the soloist because he's really great and I'm pretty shit," he says with a laugh. "I'm not even sure I did any solos on this record. So, you know, mission accomplished."

You could say the same for *Motorheart*. "It's like an anti-statement," Justin says. "It's just about reckless, joyous abandon. It's an invitation to immerse yourself in something that isn't going to make you worried." He pauses. "Unless you worry about my personality defects that have led to a series of disappointing relationships."

On occasion, apparently, even with robots.

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** 60th anniversary Gibson Les Paul, 2000 Les Paul Standard (Dan); Charvel SoCal, Les Paul Custom (Justin)
- **AMPS** Modified Marshall 1987 X 50-watt head, Friedman Small Box 50, 1964 Vox AC 30, Marshall 4x12 cabinet with Celestion Greenbacks
- **EFFECTS** Devi Ever FX Godzilla, Devi Ever FX Shoe Gazer, vintage Ibanez Tube Screamer, Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive

ERIKA GOLDRING/GETTY IMAGES

"I would defend pop music to my grave," Emily Wolfe says

Emily Wolfe

THIS POP-LOVING AUSTIN ROCKER FORTIFIES HER EARWORM MELODIES WITH CHUNKY, MID-RANGE TONES — COURTESY OF HER SIGNATURE EPIPHONE

By Mark McStea

EMILY WOLFE'S SOPHOMORE album, *Outlier*, takes her bluesy rock stylings and adds a sheen of pop gloss to the recipe, thanks to producer Michael Schuman's ear for commerciality. That shouldn't come as a surprise; Wolfe has been vocal about her equal appreciation of Ariana Grande and Stevie Ray Vaughan. "To me, pop is so important and so relevant. When you listen to modern pop, those songs are immediately stuck in your head. To me, that's the point of art, to stick. I would defend pop music to my grave."

Wolfe started playing at age five but had a couple of false starts before she found her groove. "It didn't come easily at first — it definitely took a minute. I started to try to teach myself, and then I had a lesson with somebody who told me I wasn't any good, which deterred me a little, but when we moved from North Carolina to Texas, I definitely latched onto the guitar as a way of coping with being in a new place as a teenager. It evolved from there."

Wolfe's guitar sound is a rich, mid-heavy crunch that has elements of Billy Gibbons' sonic signature. "He's a big influence. I tried to emulate his tone a lot — super mid-rangey and chunky. I love midrange stuff, especially with my Epiphone Sheraton, which has such a fat sound and sits really well in the mix." The Sheraton she's referring to is actually her signature model. "I play that model now; it's identical to the ones in stores. The first prototype had super-hot pickups that didn't work with the body, but we changed to low output pickups. It just really sings."

Wolfe's pedal board is packed with effects to help achieve that thick, chewy tone. "Yeah, but there are three key pedals that I gravitate toward: EarthQuaker Device's Tentacle, which is an octave-up pedal; a Fulltone OCD; and an MXR six band EQ. Before that, in my chain I use an Origin Effects Cali 76, which is a fantastic compressor; it's so transparent, but it seems to make me play better. Live, I use a Fender Deville 410 because it's super reliable. In the studio, I use a variety of amps from Silvertones to old tweed Fenders and a Concert Reverb 4x10, which is the most amazing-sounding amp I own, but if I move it out of its place physically, I'm afraid it'll fall apart."

"The point for me is for the song to be something that will resonate with people on a level they didn't realize that they could feel"

Wolfe is unabashed about her desire to score hit singles. "I feel like that is the goal, but I also want to make sure the songs I write come from a place of honesty, not just anything to get a hit. The point for me is for the song to be something that will resonate with people on a level they didn't realize that they could feel; the priority for me is realness in everything I do."

BETH GARRABRANT

Pat McCrory [*left*] and Brady Ebert at a recent Turnstile show. "There's always the thought that we're stepping away from who Turnstile was originally as a band," McCrory says of *Glow On*, their 2021 album

Turnstile

THE BUZZED-ABOUT HARDCORE BAND EMBRACES THE GROOVE ON *GLOW ON*

By Jim Beaugez

HIRING A BRAND-name producer like Mike Elizondo, a former protégé of Dr. Dre whose résumé includes decidedly non-guitar artists like Eminem and Fiona Apple, could have led hardcore heroes Turnstile down a much different path for their latest album, *Glow On*. But co-guitarists Brady Ebert and Pat McCrory instead found a kindred spirit who shared their language of riffs and tones.

"We would give him a vague description, like it needs to be punchy, [*or*] maybe describe it with hand motions, and he'd be like, 'Oh, I know exactly how to do that,'" Ebert says. "He grew up playing in thrash bands, so for getting guitar tones, he was very quick at picking up what we wanted to do."

But Turnstile doesn't follow the archetype of classic hardcore bands, anyway. Instead of relying on speed and half-time breakdowns for their intensity, the band rolls out chunky, groove-oriented riffs to make the circle pit churn. Ebert and McCrory get it honestly, leaning into the metal-influenced punk they heard on skateboarding videos and influential Nine-

Instead of relying on speed and half-time breakdowns for their intensity, the band rolls out chunky, groove-oriented riffs to make the circle pit churn

ties compilation CDs like Epitaph Records' *Punk-O-Rama* series, as well as grabbing inspiration and gear tips from tourmates like Power Trip and Take Offense.

"Our music is very riff driven, so a lot of times it starts with a rhythmical idea and then filling in the chords afterward," Ebert says. Those riffs, adds McCrory, can originate on piano or guitar, or even simply as a drum pattern. "When the band is collectively in a room to write stuff together," he says, "it starts as a concept of, 'This has got the groove here,' and then it's more about what's going to get everybody excited rather than driving specifically from one certain idea."

Elizondo perfected the album's dynamic rhythm guitar tone by blending a Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier and a 5150, but on the road McCrory plugs his 2015 Gibson Les Paul Classic into an Orange Rockerverb MKIII. Ebert, who plays most of the leads, prefers the thinner neck and profile of a Jackson Soloist and chooses from his stash of EVH 5150 III and original Peavey 5150 and 6505 series amps.

"There's always the thought that we're stepping away from who Turnstile was originally as a band," McCrory says of *Glow On*'s more vibey moments. "We made these [*earlier*] songs heavy and fast, and it's hard to force yourself outside of what you're used to. Now we've found that you can do those things as long as you're committed to them. Those dancey, slower songs that get a little cleaner, it was very natural."

TIM CAYEM

Requiem for a Monkee

REMEMBERING MICHAEL NESMITH (1942-2021)

By Alan di Perna

A MAN OF many talents and broadband, multimedia vision, Michael Nesmith is a uniquely difficult artist to categorize. "Nez," who died of heart failure at age 78 on December 10 at his home in Carmel, California, experienced major mid-to-late Sixties fame as a member of the Monkees — the made-for-TV rock group that morphed into a real band over the course of its initial four-year career. He spent much of the rest of his life trying to come out from under the Monkees' shadow, and come to terms with the quartet's unlikely legacy. His indelible association with the Monkees tended to obscure his solo career as a country-flavored songwriter, guitarist, singer and record producer, not to mention his enormous contribution to the birth of pop music video and the MTV era.

Of the four young men chosen in 1965 by television producers Bob Rafelson and Bert Schneider to become Monkees, Nesmith was the most musically seasoned. The tall, drawling Texan had been kicking around L.A. since '62, playing the clubs and hosting "Hootenanny Night" at the Troubadour. He'd released a few singles on small labels. As a songwriter, he'd inked a publishing deal that would see his tunes recorded by artists like the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Linda Ronstadt and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, among others.

On the strength of all this, Nesmith was able to cut a deal with the Monkees' music supervisor, Don Kirshner, whereby Nez would be the only Monkee allowed to sing and produce two of his own compositions per Monkees album — but not play any of the instruments. The group's other three members — Peter Tork, Micky Dolenz and Davy Jones — were only allowed to sing. Nesmith, by contrast, landed himself in the producer's seat, directing a roomful of L.A.'s finest session players — guitar legends like James Burton, Glen Campbell, Carol Kaye and other members of the legendary Wrecking Crew.

Nesmith always seemed to have had the big picture in mind. But he had a clear-eyed vision of his strengths and weaknesses as a songwriter.

"My primary craft is writing," he told *Guitar World's* Damian Fanelli in 2013, "and songwriting was always what moved me along. I fell into the folk scene early on because of the importance of the song and lyrics there, and then followed that with some rock and roll and country efforts. When I got on the show, the pop community was strange to me and, by and large, didn't respond well to my songwriting or singing. The show didn't do anything to help that. I was always outside the main effort of the show's music. I would've liked to have been more accepted as a pop song writer, but there was little I could do about it since I didn't know how to write a pop song."

Nesmith's song "Mary, Mary" nonetheless became a sizable hit for the Monkees in 1967. But for most of his time with the group he "traveled to the beat of a different drum" — to quote the '67 hit he wrote for Ronstadt. But when the Monkees seized control of their own music on their third album, 1967's *Headquarters*, Nesmith played a bellwether role, recording and producing more of his own compositions with the group, and coming into his own as a guitarist. He played the model 6075 and 6076 12-string electric archtops that Gretsch had made for him, as well as the occasional steel guitar part.

The Monkees TV show was enormously popular. Many aspiring garage band guitarists identified with Nesmith's playfully intelligent demeanor, sardonic wit and even the stupid wool hat the show's producers required him to wear, after he'd turned up for his audition with the thing on his head. But the Monkees were also derided for not playing their own instruments. The Monkees' obvious indebtedness to the Beatles got them labeled "The PreFab Four." Their lighthearted televised hijinks hit a sour note at a time when rock was starting to take itself more seriously.

The actual Fab Four, however, were pro-Monkees. Nesmith was at a dinner party with John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Eric Clapton when someone played a tape by a then-unknown artist called Jimi Hendrix. The Monkees hired Hendrix to open for them on tour in 1967. But Hendrix was a little too loud, wild, weird and maybe even a little too Black for many among the Monkees' pre-teen audience. He left the tour after only seven dates.

The Monkees nonetheless trickled into the counterculture to a certain degree. Their psychedelicized 1968 feature film *Head* featured a cameo by Frank Zappa and was sufficiently trippy and well-made to attract admirers. A man with his own eye on the visual media, Zappa was pro-Monkees as well. But not everyone in his audience — nor Beatles fans for that matter — shared his vision. In his 2017 autobiography, *Infinite Tuesday*, Nesmith offered a clear-eyed take on the Monkees backlash phenomenon:

"If the 17-to-20-year-old Beatle fan and serious music lover loathed the Monkees as a cheap copy, the 9-to-12-year-old television baby thought they were a matter of fact. Their television set was coming to life... Older brothers and sisters might shout them down, but the preteens had their own reality, even if they couldn't explain it."

The twain never did quite meet, and the counterculture current became the wave of the future. NBC-TV, however, wasn't quite ready to dive into that wave. The Monkees' show was cancelled in 1968. The hits stopped coming. Tork jumped ship in '68. Nesmith soldiered on for one last album, 1969's *The Monkees Present*, and left shortly thereafter, in 1970.

He started the new decade with a new career phase, forming the First National Band in 1970, with pedal steel ace Red Rhodes. Their wistful recording of Nesmith's sentimental ballad "Joanne," charted at Number 21 on *Billboard*'s Top 100. The First National Band were early participants in the groundswell of country-inflected rock that had been touched off by the Byrds' landmark 1968 album *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. In a sense, the First National Band is one of the missing links in the chain that leads from *Sweetheart* to the Eagles' mega-platinum self-titled 1972 album.

Over the course of the next three decades, Nesmith would release a dozen albums of country-flavored rock — as a solo artist, fronting the First National band or its successor, the Second National Band. He made his mark as a producer as well, with albums by U.K. folk guitar legends Bert Jansch and Iain Matthews. Simultaneously, Nesmith emerged as a founding father of the MTV era. The pioneering video clip that he made for his 1977 song "Rio" was key to the launch of "PopClips," a music video program that predates and was a probable inspiration for MTV, which launched

LEFT: GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS RIGHT: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

[*left*] Michael Nesmith in the recording studio, circa 1972, with a Gibson Les Paul Custom; [*right*] Nesmith on the set of *The Monkees* in Los Angeles, August 1967, with a custom-made Gretsch 6076

in 1981. The "Rio" clip became part of Nesmith's groundbreaking longform video *Elephant Parts*, which won the first-ever Music Video Grammy — a brand-new category that debuted in 1982. All this was produced under the aegis of Nesmith's Pacific Arts Corporation. From his perspective as a co-star of one of the Sixties' most successful pop music-related TV programs, Nesmith had seen the future from a perspective few others had at that time.

"When the [*Monkees*] TV show came online, there was a hidden element that nobody really understood, of television making its way into the culture," Nesmith told journalist Paul Wilner in 2017. "But nobody really understood what was going on, except perhaps Marshall McLuhan [*who famously coined the phrase, 'the medium is the message.'*] I only see now, in retrospect, how television was creating its own reality."

The "TV babies" who'd loved the Monkees in their pre-teen years were now coming of age, and video would become an integral part of their pop music experience — something that holds true to this very day. And Nesmith was in on the ground floor. He produced videos for Michael Jackson and Lionel Ritchie during this period, and also began producing feature films, including the 1984 cult classic *Repo Man*.

For a while Nesmith held himself aloof from Monkees reunions. This was often read as a sign of his disinterest, or even contempt. But it may well be that he was just plain too busy with his many multimedia projects. He began to warm up to his old bandmates in the latter half of the Eighties, doing one-off concert and TV appearances, and eventually embarking on full length tours with the group. He was fully onboard for the 1996 album *Justus*, which was entirely written, performed and produced by all four Monkees. Nesmith reprised one of his best-loved songs, "Circle Sky" from *Head* and also took a lead role in the album's production, finishing mixing while the other three went out on tour.

He wouldn't make another record with his former bandmates until 2016's *Good Times!*, the Monkees' 50th anniversary album. Half a decade down the road, the zeitgeist had shifted considerably. The Monkees had become cult heroes for a generation of alternative rockers. Adam Schlesinger from Nineties power pop icons Fountains of Wayne produced *Good Times!* and played bass on many of the tracks. Songs for the album were contributed by a post-punk Who's Who that included Andy Partridge (XTC), Rivers Cuomo (Weezer), Ben Gibbard (Death Cab for Cutie), Noel Gallagher (Oasis) and Paul Weller (the Jam/Style Council).

So Mike Nesmith spent his final years basking in the glow of this much-belated hipster recognition. Following the deaths of Jones and Tork, Nesmith continued to tour with Dolenz, while continuing to create his own music. His final album, *Rays*, appeared in 2005. But in 2018, he was forced to cancel the last four dates of a tour with Dolenz, and needed to undergo quadruple bypass heart surgery. He returned to action in 2019 and played his final date with Dolenz — the concluding night of the Monkees Farewell Tour on November 14, 2021, at the Greek Theater in L.A. Less than a month later, he was dead.

"He was really comfortable in the end," Nesmith's manager Andrew Sandoval told *Variety*. "He told me in his living room just a few months ago, before the tour; he said, 'You know, I finally really have come to accept the Monkees' music. I really like it now.' He started to see it more through the eyes of his fans, of how they loved it. And that was bringing him a lot of joy at the end of his life. Their joy was coming back on him. He finally really felt that, and it lit him up, you know?"

Clapton Goes Unplugged Again

...AND OTHER NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Eric Clapton — in a Martin mood — during the *The Lady in the Balcony* sessions

EC'S LOCKDOWN BLUES

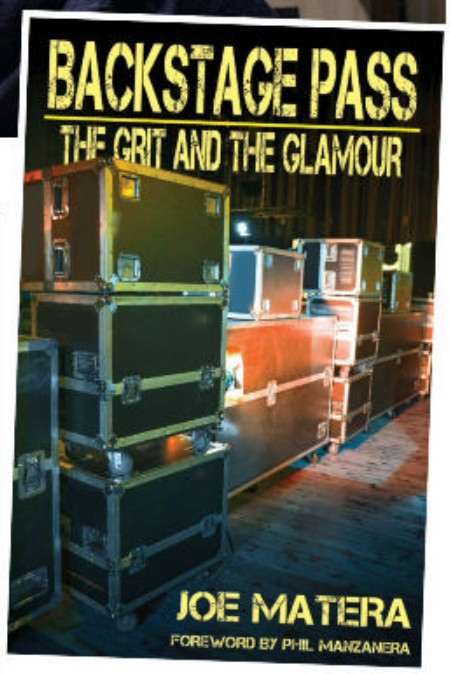
WHAT DO YOU do when all your touring plans — including a residency at London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall — are thwarted, thanks to the pandemic and ongoing effects of Covid? Well, in Eric Clapton's case, you retreat with your band to the leafy English countryside and record a private concert to make the best of a bad situation. Recorded live at Cowdray House in West Sussex, *The Lady in the Balcony: Lockdown Sessions* sees Slowhand and his long-serving comrades (Nathan East on bass/vocals, Steve Gadd on drums and Chris Stainton on keys) giving classic originals the unplugged treatment, as well as three electrified renditions using his Gibson ES-335. The setlist also features a handful of covers, including Peter Green-era Fleetwood Mac tracks "Black Magic Woman" and "Man of the World" and blues standard "Key to the Highway," which was a highlight of Derek and the Dominos' celebrated 1970 debut album. So, if you've ever wondered what "Layla," "Bell Bottom Blues" and "After Midnight" would sound like through the guitar giant's favored Martin 000-28 — from inside a Tudor house famously visited by English royals like King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, no less — look no further.

THE NEW SNARK: STAY IN CHARGE!

WHEN DANELECTRO RELEASED the original Snark clip-on tuner back in 2010, they ended up creating one of the most popular tools of its kind — to date selling more than 25 million units. The newest version of the guitar accessory is now rechargeable via any standard USB port and is said to provide "weeks to months of regular use" at full charge. As well as offering "lightning speed response" on its high-resolution LCD display, the new clip-on tuner also can be used for lower-register instruments such as baritone guitars and extended-range basses, and it features fully chromatic pitch calibration between 415-466Hz.

THE COMMANDER'S HEALING HANDS

INSPIRED BY THE long road to recovery after a serious shoulder injury, Norwegian neoclassical shred virtuoso The Commander in Chief recently launched Guitar Rehab, her own online guitar-fitness course based on her findings. Aimed at players who want to practice safely in order to avoid injury, as well as those hoping to heal, the course consists of three modules with more than 20 videos of stretches and exercises to make sure you're practicing correctly and not putting yourself at risk. As the old adage goes, better safe than sorry! Check out virtuosomusicgroup.com/guitar-rehab



YOUR VERY OWN *BACKSTAGE PASS*

***BACKSTAGE PASS: THE** Grit and the Glamour*, the first book by music journalist, guitar teacher and *GW* contributor Joe Matera, takes readers inside the dressing rooms of legendary gunslingers like Steve Vai and Joe Satriani and features a foreword from Phil Manzanera of Roxy Music fame. Its pages aim to expose the lesser-known aspects of life on the road and the business side of the industry — a grim reality check for those hoping for a career in music, with no shortage of valued insight from many of its consummate professionals. Visit amazon.com/dp/1909360929 to check it out.

— Amit Sharma

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FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK

BY AMIT SHARMA

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GW

And now, everything a guitarist needs **TO HEADBANG ON A BUDGET**, *including five metal-friendly axes for under $500*

IF THERE'S ANYTHING metal guitarists tend to look for in their equipment, it's most surely *power*. While there will always be those who choose to rely more on the actual riffs for heaviness, it'd be fair to say a mega majority of metal players are generally in pursuit of tonal extremes — whether through a guitar with extra-hot pickups, a pedal wired to cataclysmic weight or, indeed, the sonic brutality procured by their amp of choice. As Yngwie Malmsteen, a man who embodies heavy metal to its unrelenting core, once famously said, "More is more." The good news is that tones heavy enough to knock the earth off its axis have never been more attainable and affordable, as demonstrated by this roundup of ear-bleeding metal machinery. Enjoy!

JACKSON

X SERIES DINKY DK3XR HSS

$499, jacksonguitars.com

There's no shortage of metal-friendly appointments on this new-for-2021 X Series Dinky — from loud color schemes, a reverse headstock, inverted pearloid sharkfin inlays, a Floyd Rose-licensed bridge and a high-output bridge humbucker. Simply put, it's the kind of instrument that will make your presence known in just about every way. It also plays like a dream, with a sculpted shredder's cut heel for easy access to the upper frets and a 12- to 16-inch compound radius laurel fingerboard for an effortlessly smooth performance.

IBANEZ

RG SERIES RG7421PB 7-STRING

$499, ibanez.com

Given its eye-catching Sapphire Blue Flat finish, this fixed-bridge seven-string from Ibanez's RG series doesn't look like a budget guitar at all. Nor does it sound like one, with a Meranti body and Poplar Burl top delivering maximum resonance through its pair of passive ceramic Quantum 7 humbuckers. Most impressive of all, however, is its playability — feeling less bulky and laborious and ultimately more user-friendly than a lot of other seven-strings out there, especially in this price bracket.

SQUIER

CONTEMPORARY ACTIVE STARCASTER

$449, fender.com

It's no secret that semi-hollow bodies and extreme levels of gain tend to not mix all that well, though thankfully Squier managed to find a way around this by sealing the F-holes for minimized feedback. The active SQR ceramic humbuckers look and sound like everyone's favorite EMG set, unleashing the kind of hell rarely associated with guitars of this ilk. It's a great choice for metal players on the hunt for something less typical and more obscure.

ESP LTD

TE-200

$449, espguitars.com

With guitarists in bands like Slipknot and Gojira opting for T-style bodies in recent years, perceptions around this kind of shape have slowly started to change. This particular LTD is very most versatile beast, thanks to its ESP Designed LH-150 humbuckers offering split coil modes as well as the full ceramic thunder you'd be hoping for. It features a mahogany body, black hardware, a thin U-shaped maple neck and a 24-fret roasted Jatoba fingerboard for two octaves of metallic dynamism.

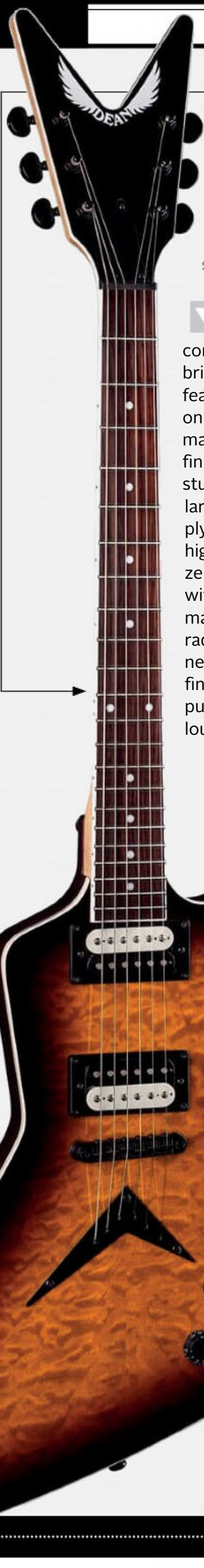
KRAMER

ASSAULT 220

$379, kramerguitars.com

A new addition for this year, the Kramer Assault 220 certainly lives up to its name — particularly in this black finish with red binding, inlays and pickup covers. Not as heavy as a Les Paul, though very much in that tonal ballpark, the new model has dual Alnico V humbuckers, which also can be split, and a Floyd Rose-licensed tremolo to cater for all your divebomb needs. The newly revamped Kramer line is clearly going from strength to strength.

As the great Yngwie Malmsteen once said, "More is more!"



DEAN

ZX QUILT MAPLE TRANSPARENT BRAZILIA

$429, deanguitars.com

The Dean X series really does live up to the company's promise of bringing their high-end features and looks to players on tighter budgets. The quilt maple top and Trans Brazilia finish is, quite frankly, stunning and works spectacularly well against the single-ply white binding and high-output DMT Designed zebra pickups. Completed with die-cast sealed tuning machines, a 12-inch fretboard radius and C-shape maple neck with a rosewood fingerboard, it's a guitar purpose-built for all things loud and proud.

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DIEZEL

VH MICRO

$329, diezelamplification.com

Having played a big part in the searing metallic attack of bands like Metallica and Tool over the years, the Diezel VH4 has rightly become one of the most revered metal amps of all time, offering 100 watts of unparalleled gain. Interestingly, the German company has avoided jumping on the lunchbox-amp bandwagon thus far — though they just recently unveiled their VH Micro, which packs the flagship's head-caving third channel and its controls — complete with a series effects loop — into an impressively miniature package. Given its incredibly competitive price point, there are no KT77s or any tubes whatsoever to be found here, but don't be fooled; its 30 watts of solid-state power pack some serious punch.

BOSS

HM-2W

$179, boss.info

Originally produced between 1983 and 1991, the Boss HM-2 became legendary for its grinding "buzzsaw" sound — one that was adopted by Swedish death metal bands like Entombed for its ability to melt eardrums with unprecedented levels of distortion. Interestingly, the pedal was also used in the Eighties by blues masters like Eric Clapton and David Gilmour on less extreme settings. Calls for it to be reissued were answered this year, the new Waza Craft version offering its classic mode and a new custom voicing that somehow packs in even more gain.

"EVERYTHING'S BLEEDING INTO EVERY MICROPHONE, WITH NO WAY OF SEPARATING ONE INSTRUMENT FROM ANOTHER. AND WE WERE LITERALLY RIGHT ON TOP OF EACH OTHER"
—WARREN HAYNES

Gov't Mule [*from left*]: Matt Abts, Danny Louis, Jorgen Carlsson and Warren Haynes

HOWLIN'

BY **ALAN PAUL** PHOTO BY **JAY SANSONE**

MULE

Believe it or not, **GOV'T MULE'S** latest album, *Heavy Load Blues*, is **WARREN HAYNES'** first foray into full-on blues (and it all happened while they were recording another album entirely)

YOU CAN BE excused for feeling surprised at the news that Gov't Mule's *Heavy Load Blues* is Warren Haynes' first proper all-blues album. The music has been at the heart of Haynes' playing — not only since Gov't Mule's 1995 self-titled debut, but since he burst onto the international scene with the Allman Brothers Band's 1989 comeback album, *Seven Turns,* and established himself as one of the great guitar heroes of the last quarter century.

But *Heavy Load Blues* is indeed the first time that Haynes has released a complete collection of blues songs, split evenly between originals and tunes by Elmore James, Howlin' Wolf, Junior Wells and other blues luminaries.

"I've been thinking about doing an album like this for a very long time, but I was not sure if it would be a solo project or a Mule record," Haynes says. "I'm a bit surprised, too, that it's taken this long, but what better time than now after the pandemic?"

Gov't Mule was started by Haynes, bassist Allen Woody and drummer Matt Abts as an outlet for Haynes and Woody to bust out of their day gigs in the Allman Brothers Band and stretch the boundaries of music. They were paying tribute to power trios like Cream, Mountain and the Jimi Hendrix Experience, with material often rooted in the blues but ready to blast off in any direction. It's the template the band has retained for 26 years, through Woody's 2000 death and the transformation from trio to quartet with the addition of keyboardist/second guitarist Danny Louis. Jorgen Carlsson has been the band's bassist since 2008. Through all those changes and developments, the band's essential approach has remained steady, as evidenced by the group's previous studio album, 2017's ambitious *Revolution Come Revolution Go*.

When Haynes' wife and manager Stefani Scamardo suggested that the time was right to record the blues album they had long discussed, Haynes was excited but also hesitant for one simple reason: he had been extremely productive writing songs during the pandemic-induced time off the road.

"I was home more than I've been since I was 15 and consequently did more writing than I've done in decades," he says. "There were a lot of negatives about that time, but that was one of the positives. So I thought that it would be a lot of fun but also that I'd written all this new music, and really wanted to record it as well."

Haynes came up with an ambitious solution, the kind that comes naturally to him: recording two albums simultaneously.

"Our mission became finding a place where we can set up two entirely different setups and record two records at the same time," Haynes says. "And that's what we did." The second album will be out in 2022.

You actually cut two albums at once, which is pretty amazing. Tell me about that process.

The other album is what I consider the followup to *Revolution Come Revolution Go* — the next proper Mule album. We did not record back-to-back albums; we recorded both at the same time. We were set up in two different rooms. In the big room, we had all our Gov't Mule toys. And there was a much smaller adjoining room, with low ceilings, with an entirely different setup: small drum kit, a bunch of little amplifiers, and no headphones. And we just played live like we were in a little club in there. We would go in early in the day and record new songs all day. Then somewhere around dinnertime, we would take a break and over the next couple hours, move over to the blues room and start playing blues for the late night. Same routine every day.

Did you even have to think about whether the blues album should be cut late at night?

No. It was kind of obvious. Johnny Winter said that Muddy Waters said that *Hard Again* was his favorite recording experience because Johnny let him record late at night. He said it's not natural to play the blues in the middle of the day, and I tend to agree. Also, there was something really cool about the fact that we would go in and record these Gov't Mule songs all day that were much more complex or structured, and then at the end of the day we could stop thinking and just play blues. It was like taking off ankle weights. We could step away and kind of get lost in the other world for a while.

The album has a real vintage feel. Were you aiming to evoke a specific sound or era?

It was important that the two records sound completely different from each other. We wanted *Heavy Load Blues* to sound [*the way*] those old records — cut between about 1955 and 1975 — sound in our heads. Since we were set up completely live, with even vocals going down on the track, everything's bleeding into every microphone, with no way of separating one instrument from another. And we were literally right on top of each other, like being on a small stage, except facing each other. Matt had a really small drum kit, the organ was playing through an Ampeg B-15. I had all these old little amps set up and I could just plug into one or more; I often had one in the room with us and two out in the big room being mic'd far away.

The first song, "Blues Before Sunrise," is not the Albert King tune, but an obscure Elmore James song. That caught me off guard!

I was looking for an Elmore song that I hadn't done before. When you're dealing with Elmore, it's really about the lyric because the songs are so similar to each other, but this also had a strange feel in the way the vocal melody fits in with the chord progression. It sounds like it has an extra bar.

And the sound is so authentic. What are you playing?

A Danelectro Pro 1 through a Supro, and maybe one or two other amps. The vocal is coming through an amp as well. I had two vocals set up: a bullet mic going through a Fender Champ, and a regular microphone going through an amp that wasn't quite as dirty. We could also blend the clean sound in or not. It was all about capturing an inspirational vibe.

"Love Is a Mean Old World" and "Hole in My Soul" are both originals based around cool riffs. Did they start there, or did you add them at the end to complete the song?

The horn riff that opens "Hole in My Soul" was something that was in my head, and I just sang it into my phone to capture it. The song was separate, and at some point I realized they go together. I wrote "Love Is a Mean Old World" with Ray Sisk and Rick Huckabee about two years ago, and it just has a vibe about it... it's kind of traditional blues — and kind of not.

It's nice to hear you bring back "If Heartaches Were Nickels," which you wrote a long time ago when you were making publishing tapes to sell to others, and Joe Bonamassa ended up recording it on an early album [*2000's* A New Day Yesterday].

I wrote that in '86 or '87. I recorded some blues demos, which is where Tom Dowd heard it and played it for Joe Bonamassa. And then Joe wound up recording it. There was a demo of "Before the Bullets Fly" from that same session, and Gregg [*Allman*] ended up recording that.

You've played "Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody's Home" a lot, but this is your first recording of it.

Yeah, that's the only one that we wanted to include that we played live in the past, and mostly because we've kind of come up with our own arrangement that's really cool. And we thought it would be good to at least give it a try and see what happens and if it turned out good, we would keep it, because we didn't dwell on the blues stuff.

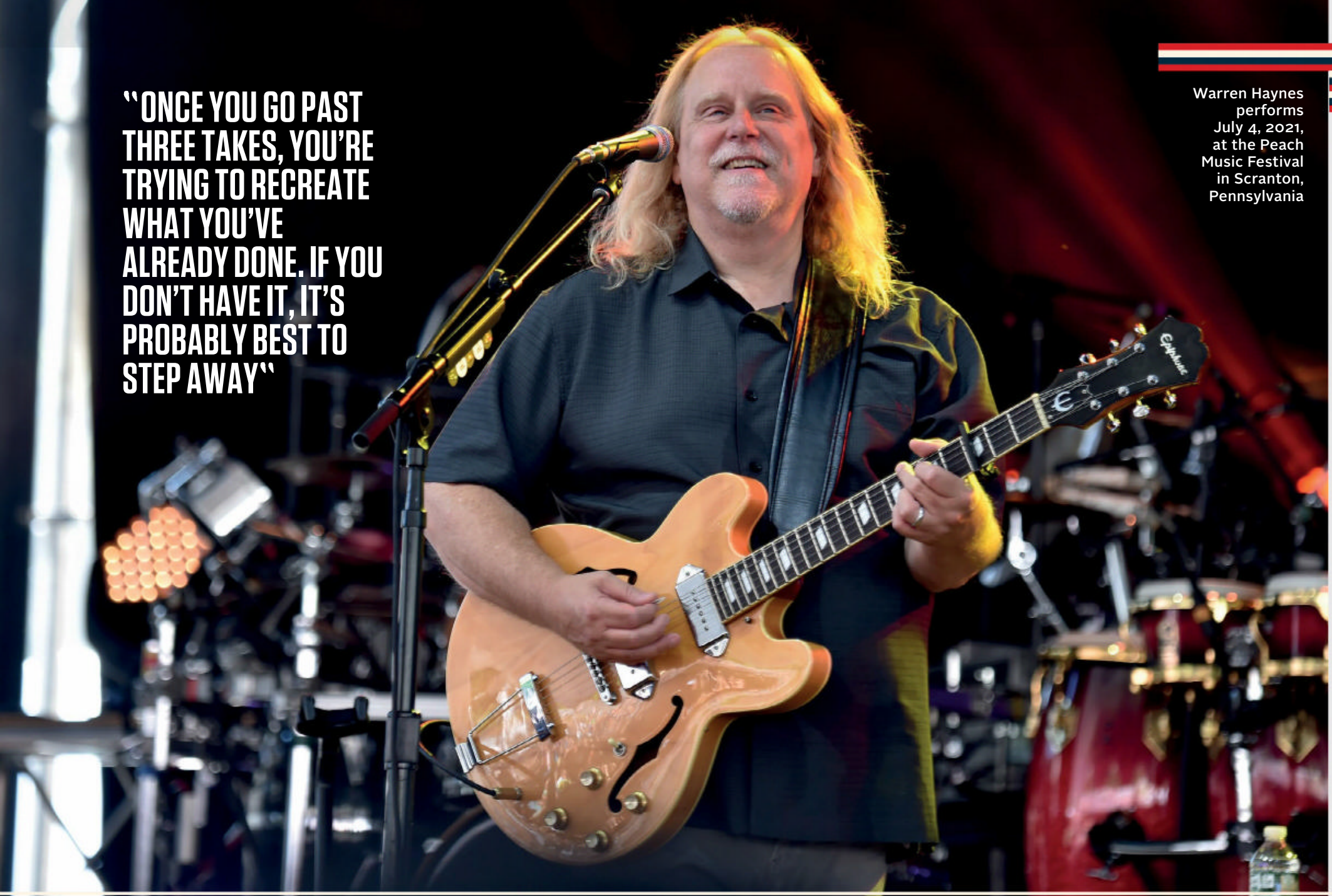
I had a big list of songs, which I tried to prioritize, but it changed all the time. I was pleasantly surprised that it turned out to be half and half: seven covers and seven original songs.

I love that you included Tom Waits' "Make It Rain."

Me too. I just love it. It was always kind of a priority because I love that tune and thought it would stand out and occupy its own unique space on the record, which it does.

We had this kind of wild thing happen with the reverb tank while recording it. I have two Fender spring reverb tanks; one's old and one's new. Billy Gibbons gave me the new one when we toured together because the old ones are so problematic. I was having an issue with the old one when we were on tour, and he was like, "Oh man, they made a really great reissue of that" and he ordered one for himself and one for me and they shipped them out on the road. We utilized both of them throughout the project. The old one was stable, but when we were recording "Make It Rain" all of a sudden, we get these noises, which I think were radio frequencies, that would set off the reverb, and it literally sounded like rain. One of the first times it happened was the first time I say "make it rain" — all of a sudden it cackles like a rainstorm. We're all

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC



"ONCE YOU GO PAST THREE TAKES, YOU'RE TRYING TO RECREATE WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY DONE. IF YOU DON'T HAVE IT, IT'S PROBABLY BEST TO STEP AWAY"

Warren Haynes performs July 4, 2021, at the Peach Music Festival in Scranton, Pennsylvania

looking at each other and laughing; during the keeper take, it happened over and over, to the extent that we didn't think we were going to be able to use the recording. We listened back and it just sounded like we were playing in a rainstorm. I was glad that we kept going!

Did you also record the other album all live?

Mostly. The biggest difference aside from the size of the rooms — the blues room has a much lower ceiling, and we were much closer together — and the gear itself is that I was using a monitor for vocals and also running it through an amp, so no headphones on the blues album. None of us wore headphones, which we did on the other album, which meant separation — and keeping a small amp near me and another one in a different room.

On a completely pragmatic level, what is the impact of wearing headphones?

Whether you can overdub. If we were isolated and wearing headphones, if somebody played something they want to fix, they can. But on the blues stuff, you couldn't punch it in because everything was in every mic. For example, because I was standing four feet from the drums, my voice was in all the drum mics. My voice is bleeding from the monitor into every track, so you either keep the track or redo it, but you're not punching in a fix.

Knowing you can't fix something could make you more conservative. Is there any part of your brain that wants to go that way?

No. I think it was more liberating than anything. It's so much more fun to play without phones. It always takes me a couple of days to get used to wearing phones on any project, and I never like the way my guitar sounds in the headphones, so hearing it in the room like you're used to hearing it live really is much more inspiring for me.

If you don't like the sound of your guitar in the headphones, then are you basically just relying on...

Instinct. In the long run, if you're not happy you can redo it, but in my recordings most of the solos are recorded live on the track. I go into a project hoping to do no overdubs. It rarely works out exactly like that, but I feel like all my best parts are when I'm playing live with the band.

It's interesting that the title track of the album is acoustic. What did you play on that?

A Gibson L-1 "Robert Johnson guitar." I think it's 1929, and it's not really loud — though it has a beautiful, authentic sound. Your instinct is to play it hard, but it doesn't sound as good. That was the last thing we recorded, just me and Danny [*Louis*], who was playing a Sixties Gibson Hummingbird. I was playing and singing at the same time, so we were married to whatever happened.

But you could always do another take! What's the maximum number of takes you did on this?

It was almost all three takes or less. None of it was laborious and a bunch of them were first takes, including "Heavy Load." The vocal felt really good and natural and we did a couple more, but that was the best. I really liked the comfortability of the vocal, and since we're keeping the live vocals, it's just part of it.

"It was almost a different guitar for every song," says Haynes, shown here sitting amid an impressive collection of guitars and amps. "I think I played 12 guitars on 14 tracks"

Elmore James probably didn't have a choice but to do just a take or two, but you do. Is it hard to get yourself in that frame of mind?

No. My experience has always been once you go past three takes, you're trying to recreate what you've already done. If you don't have it, it's probably best to step away, take a break and come back to it. If we play a song at soundcheck and it sounds good, then we don't play it that night because we feel like we just played it. The blues record was kind of that way; let's make sure and capture the early takes because they just wind up being better. And going back to what you said about the Elmore recordings, all those records had mistakes on them — or what somebody would consider a mistake. But if you removed those mistakes, would it be better or would it be worse? Howlin' Wolf's original "I Asked Her for Water" is such a strange recording. It's got that weird atonal riff going on and it takes a minute or so before the band can agree on what the riff actually is. They're all playing it differently, and for some people that might be off-putting, but I find it beautiful and perfect.

Tell me about the National steel you played on "Black Horizon."

I just got that from Derek [*Trucks*]. I called him because I was looking to buy an old National and I thought he might know of one for sale. He has an incredible one that was owned by Bukka White [*acoustic blues great and B.B. King's cousin and inspiration*]. And he said, "I've got two 1939's that are kind of sister instruments. It would be cool if we both had one, so why don't I just sell you mine?" I was so moved by him parting with it, and it's become a real prized possession. We're looking forward to getting these two guitars back together! Every time we play together is a beautiful experience.

What other guitars did you play on this album?

It was almost a different guitar for every song. I think I played 12 guitars on 14 tracks. They're all mine, except I borrowed Allen Woody's three-pickup SG Custom, which is late Sixties or early Seventies and is exactly like the one I had when I was a kid, to play on "Snatch It Back and Hold It." And I borrowed a 1963 ES-345 from my friend Paul Zagler for "Hole in My Soul."

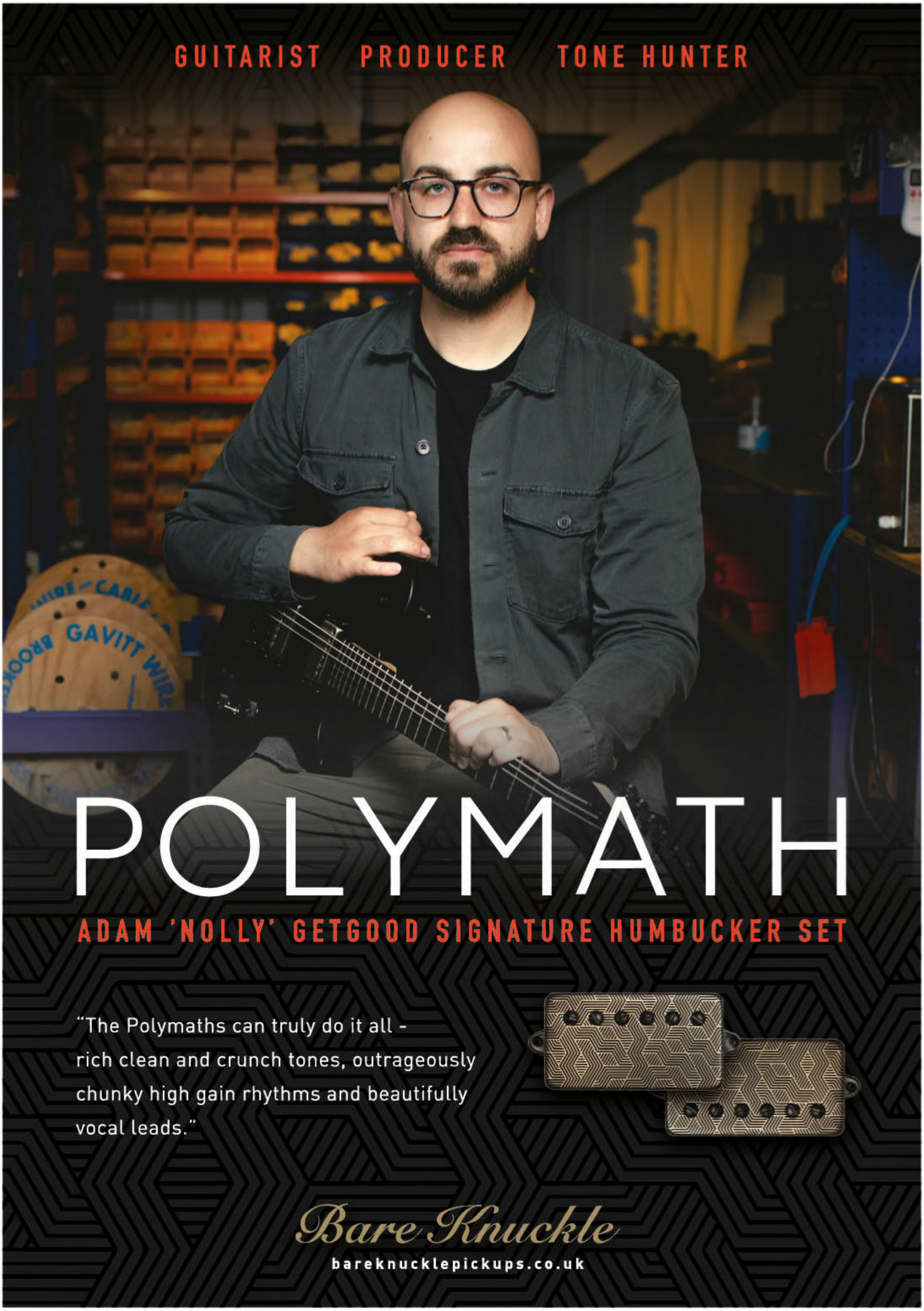
"Wake Up Dead" is a Custom Shop SG. "Love Is a Mean Old World" is a Plummer electric resonator guitar in open G. "Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City" is my tobacco sunburst Les Paul that was my Allman Brothers guitar. It was a factory second from Gibson. It was hanging on the wall because they couldn't sell it because it had two extra screw holes that somebody put in the wrong place. I went to Gibson and played every tobacco sunburst guitar they had but none of them were speaking to me, and Rick Gembar said, "What about that one hanging on my wall that we can't sell?" It was just wood: no tuners, pickups, knobs, anything. They said, "Give us about 15 minutes and we'll put it together." And it felt great!

"If Heartaches Were Nickels" was my '61 ES-335. "Make It Rain" is a Fifties or Sixties Danelectro parts guitar that almost looks like a non-reverse Firebird with lipstick pickups and a flame back. It's a very strange one. "Blues Before Sunrise" is my other Danelectro, a '60 Pro One. "Asked Her for Water" and "Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody's Home" are both my '59 Les Paul. "(Brother Bill) Last Clean Shirt" was the '61 ES-335. The Savoy Brown tune, "Street Corner Talking," is the Flying V that Grace Potter gave me. And "You Know My Love" is a sunburst Epiphone Riviera.

What amps did you run them all through?

Mostly cool little vintage amps, including a tweed Gibson Vanguard, which is a '59 or '60; a tweed Gibson Skylark, which is the same vintage; an old Supro; a tweed Fender Pro and a little Alessandro recording amp that I use quite a bit. And then on a couple of things I used a Nineties Gibson Goldtone, which is really cool. That's what I used with Dave Matthews at Central Park. GW

JAY SANSONE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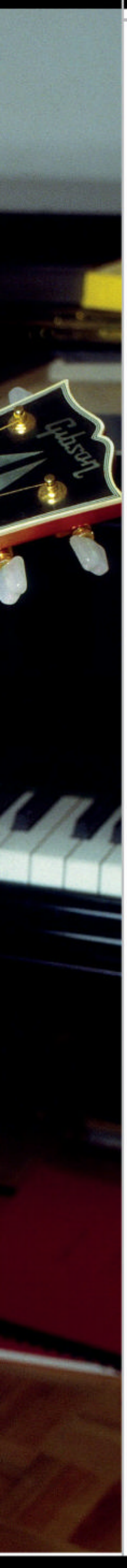
"The Polymaths can truly do it all - rich clean and crunch tones, outrageously chunky high gain rhythms and beautifully vocal leads."
Bare Knuckle
bareknucklepickups.co.uk

Frank Zappa — in the wee hours — at his home studio in the Hollywood Hills. "I was alone with him that night," says photographer John Livzey. "No one wanted to assist me on a job that *began* at midnight." Another frame from this sequence became the cover of Zappa's *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar* album (1981)

GUITAR WORLD MARCH 2022



WHEN FRANK ZAPPA SHUT UP 'N STOPPED PLAYING GUITAR

Zappa's on-again, off-again love affair with his guitar

Words by Noë Gold Photography by John Livzey

The opening frame of Alex Winter's 2020 intimate-portrait "biopic" documentary, *Zappa*,

SHOWS FRANK ZAPPA ONSTAGE AT THE SPORTS Hall in Prague, Czech Republic, in 1991 holding the Stratocaster you see on the cover of *The Guitar World According to Frank Zappa*, a 34-minute collection of rare Zappa solos on an audio cassette that *Guitar World* released in 1987. "This is the first time I've had a reason to play my guitar in three years — and now I will try and tune my guitar," he says. It was to be his last recorded guitar performance.

In fact, it was several years before that — in October 1986 — that I interviewed Zappa at his Laurel Canyon Fortress of Solitude, now occupied by Lady Gaga, to plan out the tracks of that very same *Guitar World* cassette — and talk about guitar stuff. [*A vinyl edition of the album was re-released on Record Store Day, April 13, 2019.*]

As we — *GW* associate publisher Greg Di Benedetto and I — descended with Frank into the bowels of his private inferno, otherwise known as the United Muffin Research Kitchen (U.M.R.K.), he told me with a straight face that he hadn't played serious guitar in two years and that he'd even lost his calluses.

After viewing the documentary, I put on my Sherlock Holmes hat and weighed his statement about giving up on the guitar back in '84 against his liner note on the cassette about the song "A Solo from Atlanta," recorded live in autumn 1984: "There weren't very many people at this concert. Too bad they missed it. This was toward the end of the 1984 tour. The last concert of the tour was the Universal Amphitheater in Los Angeles, December 23. I haven't played the guitar at all since then."

So... with the benefit of hindsight, having watched the *Zappa* documentary, am I to deduce that Frank missed his beloved ax so much that he picked it up again in 1991, practiced with it, jammed enough to build up his calluses to the point where he could regale the Czech faithful one last time with his finger-lickin'-good chops on that Strat before shedding his mortal coil to join Jimi, Janis and Johnny "Guitar" Watson in that great jam session in the sky? Yes, he did. Because even though he denied it, Frank loved the guitar, and the image of him with that Les Paul with the cigarette always stuck in the nut endures.

"Once I figured out that the pitch changed once you put your fingers down on the fretboard, I was hell on wheels," he says in the film. Whether he acknowledged it or not, Zappa had been admired by guitarists for years because of the sheer free-flying gonzo-ness of his solos within the otherwise-precise organization of his compositions. He was always a real Mother of a player. As a bandleader, his insistence on perfection brought out the best in his players, especially the guitarists he introduced to the world through his succession of bands; Lowell George, Adrian Belew, Warren Cuccurullo and Steve Vai all cut their teeth in Zappa's marching society.

I asked Frank about some of his protégés. "Steve Vai, for instance. Does he keep in touch with you?"

"Yeah, he comes over every once in a while."

"How did you first meet up with him?"

"He sent me a cassette when he was 17, a student at Berklee."

Steve Vai sums it up about FZ's bandleader profundity in the film: "My perspective of it is when I was in it I was a tool for the composer. Whatever is in there, he uses as he deems fit. Zappa was draconian and he saw us as components in his master plan."

A couple of years later, Vai went down to a rehearsal studio to audition. "When I went down there, he was brutal on me. I'm 20 and green and eager. He would play something on guitar and then he would say, 'Now play it in 7/8,' and I do it and then he says, 'OK, now play it reggae style 7/8,' and I do that and he says, 'OK, now add this note ... and that was impossible, not just for me but for anybody.

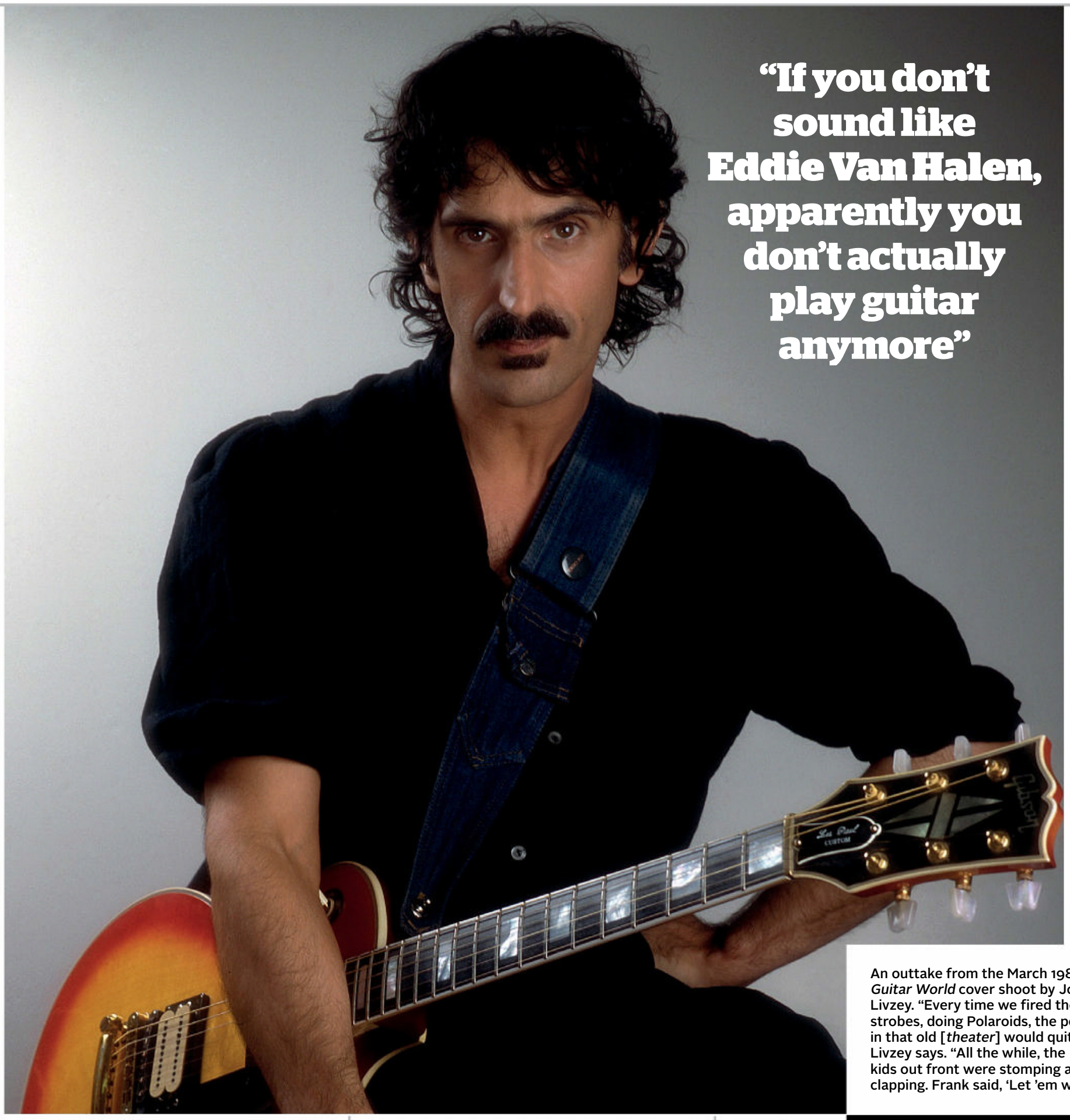
"So I go, 'I can't do that.' He goes [*Laughs*], 'I hear Linda Ronstadt is looking for a guitar player.'

"So at the end of the rehearsal I go up to him and I say, thanks for the opportunity. I'm really sorry, I'm gonna go home now. He goes, 'You're in the band.' And I hugged him. He was always cool, he was always great. I think the definition of a genius is somebody that can call into play — organically — this inspiration anytime they want, and I've seen Frank do this over and over again. This one time, Halloween at the Palladium in New York, Frank just played the guitar like I've never seen anybody in my life."

Steve is referring to the last song of that set, a cosmic rendition of "Black Napkins." I can testify to that because I was there; photographer John Livzey and I have the backstage pass to prove it. I just rewatched it on YouTube and my head is still spinning from his absolute joy of playing the guitar.

"He knew how to get the best out of people. In my case, I would test myself with things that seemed impossible to play, but which he knew I could do. He could get things from me that were unimaginable if he had not thought of them," Vai says. "And that gave me confidence, because he was not going to ask for something I could not do well."

I have always been an FOZ — Friend of Zappa. In my *Guitar World* days, I hung out with Dweezil as we rode around L.A.; I accompanied Gail Zappa and her kids one



An outtake from the March 1982 *Guitar World* cover shoot by John Livzey. "Every time we fired the strobes, doing Polaroids, the power in that old [*theater*] would quit," Livzey says. "All the while, the kids out front were stomping and clapping. Frank said, 'Let 'em wait!'"

memorable night in Trancas when we saw a performance by Van Halen at a little club in the hills above Malibu; and later, as the managing editor of VJ scripts and news segments at VH1, I worked with Moon in New York. And John Livzey, my friend who joined me in a recent interview of Ahmet Zappa and Alex Winter, was Frank's go-to photographer for album covers and shoots on-stage and off.

First the introductions.

"My name is Noë Gold, founding editor of *Guitar World*. My story with Frank goes back to the Sixties, when I got an assignment to go to the East Village and cover this band called the Mothers of Invention. A little bit later in my career I got to do the liner notes/press package for *Over-Nite Sensation*. Later on when I was with *Guitar World* I got to come out to L.A. and sit down with Frank to talk about guitars."

AHMET ZAPPA: "Awesome, a ton of awesomeness. All I got is, he was my dad."

ALEX WINTER: "My journey began in the Seventies growing up with a musician brother and a predilection for cultural personalities like Zappa's who were engaged with their art but equally engaged with the times around them. Zappa represented to my group not only a masterful musician but an artist who had a razor-sharp wit and a very astute political mind. So he took a bigger place in our minds than these guitar heroes, what they could actually be. I always felt his story was so compelling outside of his musical journey. He seemed like a ripe character for a documentary." Gail Zappa made Winter's wish come true six years ago, when she gave him full access to

SLEUTHING THE STRAT

JIMI HENDRIX'S FENDER STRATOCASTER AND ITS JOURNEY TO FRANK AND, FINALLY, DWEEZIL ZAPPA

By Noë Gold

WE PUT ON our Sherlock Holmes cap and explored the myths and the reality about this guitar, which Jimi Hendrix supposedly burned at the 1968 Miami Pop Festival (Nope — photos show he played a white Strat); Frank Zappa was given the remains (This is true; see the quote from the January 1977 issue of *Guitar Player,* below); played it on his 1976 album, *Zoot Allures,* and after Frank died, his

the very same vaults I visited.

JOHN LIVZEY: "Ahmet, the period that the film traverses, I believe you were around 5 or 6. Your dad came to my studio only once in '81 before they went on the European tour kicked off by the Halloween show. The all-night session that wound up being a cover shoot for *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar*, that was in the Laurel Canyon house. I came up about midnight and I was there till about 4. We had a good time."

AHMET ZAPPA: "How many beers and how many packs of cigarettes did you go through?"

JOHN LIVZEY: "There weren't any beers, but he had plenty of cigarettes and plenty of coffee. He had that coffee-plunger thing. He loved coffee."

AHMET ZAPPA: "Tell me about it... that was my first job, making coffee."

"I am interested in the guitar aspect," I countered. "Did you have any discussions with people like Steve Vai about the guitar? The Strat that belonged to Jimi?" [*See sidebar, Sleuthing the Strat.*]

"You can't talk about FZ without talking about the guitar," Ahmet says. "We're always discovering great new music with blistering guitar solos. There will be future releases where he plays that guitar. Eddie came by to visit every now and then. He made a huge difference to my brother; that's how I got into Van Halen — through Dweezil's unholy fascination with that mighty group. Eddie and Frank were friendly."

Flash back to my interview with Frank. I opened the conversation with: "Do you see a conceptual continuum between 'Call Any Vegetable' and 'Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar'? Or between the Mothers of Invention and *The Mothers of Prevention*?" — which I thought would open him up to some disquisition about needling versus noodling.

His response: "There are some links, yeah. The main drawback of the medium I'm working in is, until I got the computer, I was locked into making music based on the assets and/or liabilities of the guys in the band. In other words, if you want to write something that's faster than what the guys can play, you can't hear it, because they can't play it that fast. But now that I can do it with a computer, that's not a problem anymore." In other words, the mas-

Frank Zappa's crew — featuring guitarists [*from left*] Steve Vai, Zappa (playing the Hendrix Strat) and Ray White — perform at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, December 11, 1981; [*inset, above*] Cover art for 1987's *The Guitar World According to Frank Zappa*

LEFT/RIGHT: RICHARD ECCLESTONE/REDFERNS CENTER: JOHN LIVZEY

ter was doing a lot of tapping, but not on any guitar neck. With the synclavier, his new-found instrument of choice, he said, "I can enter information with the octapad; you can take a completely improvised line and build an entire composition out of it.

"You see, it's still a single line. But with this, you can improvise a single line and have that line being played by a whole ensemble of instruments and actually have those instruments play that line in harmony."

"What is all that activity doing to your guitar playing, per se?" I asked.

"Haven't touched it in two years. I don't even have the calluses on my fingertips."

There was a brief pause as the interviewers collected what was left of their minds from the floor. Then he took us down into the vaults, the vast collection of tapes, reels and canisters filled with every single piece of music he had ever created.

"Here's Eric Clapton when he came over to my house," he said. And as to the reams of tape with blistering solos we were digging through in those vaults, since they seemed to be popular, he fully intended to release them over time — which the family has done faithfully over the years. And the guitar solos that punctuated his best work?

"Well, look at it this way: I got plenty of tapes of these things. I can release another guitar solo album. And, when you see what the guitar solo has been reduced to in contemporary music, it's like an eight-bar fill. And during that fill, you're supposed to play every hammer-on lick that you know as fast as you can play it, followed by 15 feedback noises and then get the fuck out of there. You know, that's what the guitar solo has been reduced to, and that's not the medium I've ever worked in."

"But the actual playing — you don't miss it at all? Because I — and a lot of our readers — love your guitar sound. To me that always meant your personal voice within whatever music we were hearing. When you hit the guitar solo, it was not precise at all. It was something transcendent, something *out*."

"Every once in a while, I miss it," he says, noting again that he's lost the blisters on his fingers. [*Zappa sits back in his chair, letting this one sink in.*] But I don't play a style that is contemporary, you know? I don't do all the 1980s guitar noises. If you don't sound like Eddie Van Halen, then apparently you don't actually play guitar anymore — the current audience would listen to it and go, 'That's not a guitar. It doesn't go 'wee wee wee wee, wee wee wee wee.' So why do it?"

"Dweezil would probably rebut that," I say, "what with his own infatuation for Eddie Van Halen — and he is on MTV."

"Well, I can't help the way he looks. And he chooses his own wardrobe, but the fact of the matter is that Dweezil can actually play an instrument."

"So that's a fluke, according to your theory of how musicians make it these days."

"Yeah, yeah. Uh, he's a mutation. I'm not saying anything against Eddie because I think what he's done for the guitar is wonderful. But the thing that's tragic about the marketplace is that everybody decided that they were all going to do that, and then the competition is not musical. It's gymnastic. Okay, they say, 'I want to sound like Eddie, but in order to be better than Eddie I have to be faster than Eddie.' Meanwhile, Edward probably sits back and goes,

Dweezil Zappa with the Hendrix Strat (also shown on facing page) in 2002

son Dweezil got it (Not quite; Frank gave it to Dweezil while Frank was still alive). It was repaired to be playable, and Dweezil has refurbished it (True).

The guitar was given to Frank by Howard Parker, Hendrix's roadie, at the Miami Pop Festival on May 18, 1968. This rumor probably originated from an interview Frank gave to *Guitar Player's* Steven Rosen in late 1976 (published in the January 1977 issue): "The neck was cracked off, the body was all fired, and the pickups were blistered and bubbled. A lot of people thought I had Hendrix's guitar from Monterey, but it was from Miami; the one at Monterey was white, and this one is sunburst...

"There was this guy named Howard Parker — they called him 'H' — who was Hendrix's roadie, gofer and general assistant. He stayed at our house for a couple of months in the late Sixties, and he had this guitar Hendrix had given to him — I thought it was from the Miami concert. He gave it to me and we had it hanging on the wall as a decoration for years and years, and then I met some guys who were capable of putting guitars back together, so I had it done.

"I've used it on a couple of tracks, although I can't remember which ones off-hand. I haven't played it all that often, because unless you're in the right environment and you're standing in exactly the right relationship to the amplifier, it likes to feed back."

That much is true, though the guitar wasn't burned there. The incendiarism probably took place at the Finsbury Park Astoria in London [*renamed the Rainbow Theatre in 1971*] on March 31, 1967, or thereabouts. That was the opening night of a package tour with headliners the Walker Brothers, plus Cat Stevens, Englebert Humperdink and others. Hendrix was photographed at the Astoria, and those photos show the identical damage chips along the left edge of the Strat. Because the backstage photos were shot prior to the performance, the damage must be from previous gigs.

Of the guitars Hendrix was playing im-

'These guys are really stupid.' Because I don't think that's what he had in mind when he developed the style.

"The problem is, most of the best stuff I will physically be able to do on the guitar is already on tape. You just haven't heard it yet. I mean, I don't have much incentive to play it. I can still *think* guitar. But to physically manipulate it, I would have to go back in and woodshed for months on end just to be able to do it. Dweezil practices nonstop, day in, day out," he says.

"I recall you saying once that the hardest thing to accomplish in a guitar solo is to come up with a distinct melody within that solo. When you're working with the Synclavier, and you get to a point where in the old days you were thinking about composing for the guitar as well, what do you do at that juncture? Do you put a coda-type thing in there?"

"It would be difficult to talk about what I'm doing over there since you don't know what it is. I should just stop the tape and go over there and show you what I'm doing." [*Stops tape and we get a demo of Frank composing on the Synclavier. He taps out a few seemingly random rhythms, makes some observations of the CRT screen and manipulates parameters of music around the "random rhythms." The music coming out of the Synclavier is many-faceted, but typical Zappa, with percussive, marimba-esque runs and odd cat growls prancing about together.*]

"That sounds like your music. Same guy."

"Are you familiar with the piece on the *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar* album called 'While You Were Out?'" he says. "Well, on the new album [Jazz from Hell, *1986*] there's a deluxe computer version of that [*"While You Were Art II"*]. But it's not played by a guitar. I look at that thing — the recording console — and it's like a musical instrument, if you use it the right way. You've gotta start with a musical idea. if it's not a musical idea, what is it? An equation?"

"How do you get that? How do you start? Do you have entire complicated things full-blown that spring out of your brain, or do you start with something small and you build it up?"

"Sometimes I have a complete vision of what the thing is, and it's just drudgery to go in there and execute the vision, and if you like it you save 'em and make a piece on it, and if you don't you throw it away."

Again, the interviewers have to pick up their splattered brains from the floor. "How do you keep track of everything? On each floppy, there's like a million things —"

"Aaah! Then you have to have a good memory."

"Yet, when we first started talking, we discussed guitar noisemakers and these devices that you seem to have a fondness for — the Green Ringers and the Uni-Vibes and such. Things that give that idiosyncratic, anarchic tone."

"Well, I like the *sound* of a guitar. My idea of the best use of a guitar is something that's personal... not necessarily commercially viable. There are things I like to hear coming out of a guitar. But that's my personal taste."

"The *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar* series. How did the three records do commercially?"

"Real good, as a matter of fact," he counters. "And it surprised the shit out of a lot of people. When it was first released, there were 30,000 units of that three-record box sold in France alone. It's done well and it's still selling."

Again, I ask him about getting out of the house. "Do you have any urge to play at all in public anymore?"

"I'd have to have an awful good reason, and in order to play in public I'd have to learn how to play the guitar again — literally. I couldn't bend the strings."

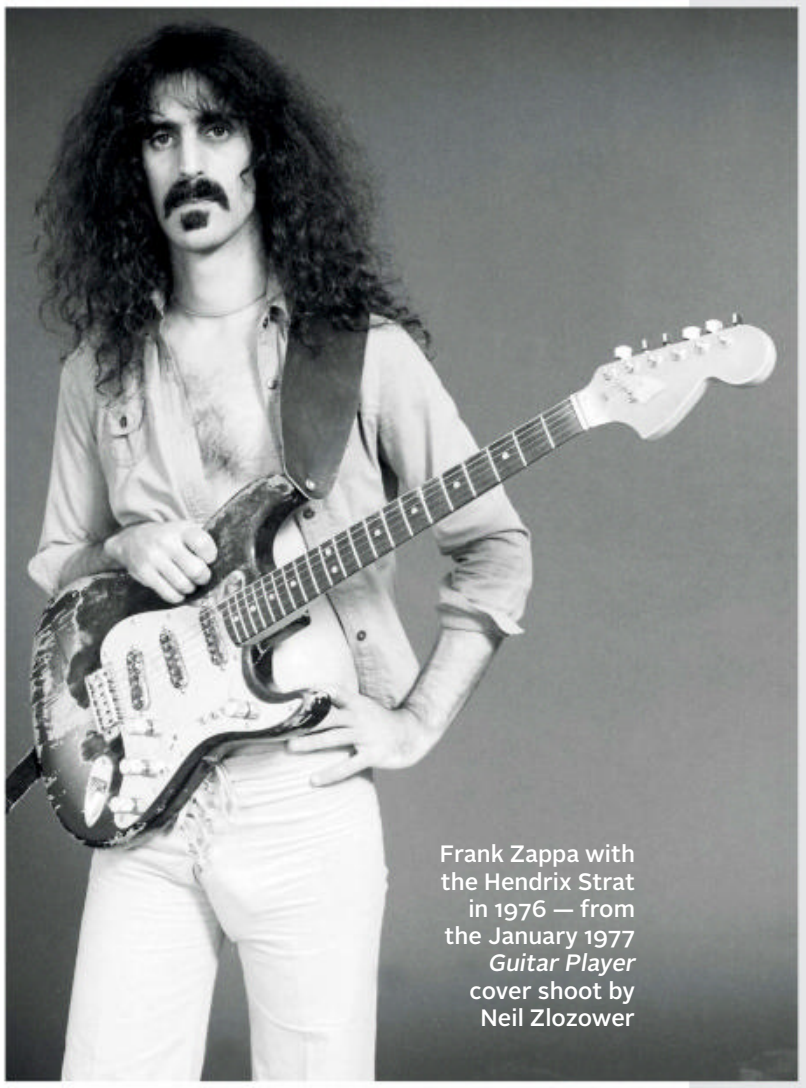
"It's weird because we're from a guitar magazine and you're not really into playing guitar anymore."

"What's that got to do with releasing guitar records? As I told you, there's plenty of stuff on tape. I can play you some stuff — examples of what's lurking in the archives. One thing I always hated to do was play guitar in a studio. I always thought it was an incredibly boring experience. Like playing in a vacuum, isn't it? So therefore, in order to really play guitar, you've got to hire a band, and that becomes cumbersome. And I guess nobody's going to want to audition just to be in Frank's backup band, just so Frank can play guitar. If it's not necessarily going to go on a record or something. It's the law of supply and demand, you know? There ya go."

And that is how I wound up working with Frank Zappa on *The Guitar World According to Frank Zappa*.

Adapted from Conversations with Rock Stars, *coming soon from a major publisher.* GW

NEIL ZLOZOWER



Frank Zappa with the Hendrix Strat in 1976 — from the January 1977 *Guitar Player* cover shoot by Neil Zlozower

mediately before the Astoria show, during his three-day residency at the Star Club in Hamburg (March 17-19, 1967), Steve Hoffman Music Forums notes that, "From photos taken at the concerts, we see that Jimi was using two sunburst Strats — one in good condition and one with severe friction damage along the lower edge — what I call the 'Tatty Strat.'"

The guitar now belongs to Dweezil Zappa, who revealed a bit of its history in a 2011 interview with Norman's Rare Guitars, which is available on YouTube. "Alex Perez at Fender made the neck," Dweezil says in the clip. "The body is original, refurbished, and the hardware totally replaced..."

According to a number of forums and researchers, the guitar was put on auction in Las Vegas in May 2002 by Dweezil, who hoped it would fetch a million dollars. After it failed to sell (it reached a bid of $500,000), it was put up for auction again that September for a lower price, this time at the Cooper Owen auction house in the U.K. For the second time, the guitar failed to reach its asking price.

Finally, a blog called Frank Zappa Newspaper concluded that, "...Hendrix only owned two Sunbursts, and it is thought that this is the one that was torched on the two occasions, according to Ted Owen of Cooper Owen auctioneers."

Guitar Player again: "Dweezil found it in pieces under the stairs at his father's studio and set about putting it back together. 'When I found it taken apart, in 1991, I told my dad I'd found the Hendrix guitar, and he said I should have it.' "

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Steve Vai with his Hydra guitar. “I’m very fortunate in that whatever ridiculous ideas come into my head, the people at Ibanez can make them real,” he says

GUITAR WORLD MARCH 2022

SHUT UP 'N PLAY YER GUITAR

After two serious surgeries that affected his ability to play guitar, **S|T|E|V|E V|A|I** could have simply packed it in. Instead, he gave himself some familiar-sounding advice and emerged with is most dazzling new album in years. *(And yes, we asked him about that triple-neck guitar!*

BY JOE BOSSO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY DIMARZIO

"[*The Hydra has*] got piezos, sustainers, lights, sample and hold features," Vai says. "It started about five years ago, but the whole thing probably took a year and a half. I was stunned that they could make the thing"

ON HIS SPECTACULAR

new album, *Inviolate*, Steve Vai has created some of the most adventurous, magical and powerful instrumental music of his career. But it wasn't the record he planned to make at all.

"The way the album came about was a complete surprise to me," he says. "I was actually working on a solo acoustic album with vocals, something I always wanted to do. I was pretty far into it, but things beyond my control intervened, and I had to switch gears and recalibrate my thinking. I actually had no real choice in the matter."

Vai isn't being melodramatic. It was in the fall of 2020 when he noticed that a pain in his right shoulder — one he believes stemmed from years spent hunched over his guitar while growing up, and possibly exacerbated from working out — was becoming progressively worse. He saw doctors and therapists and tried various treatments, but nothing seemed to alleviate the condition. Finally, he was faced with one option: surgery. "Three tendons had torn, and they wouldn't just heal themselves," he says. "When the doctor went in, he said it looked like a hand grenade had gone off. The nurse told me that she had never, in her entire career, seen a bicep tendon in that condition."

While recuperating, Vai was required to keep his right arm in a sling called "the Knappsack," nicknamed after his surgeon, Dr. Knapp. Playing the guitar was out — or so he thought — until one day he received a prototype of one of his new Ibanez signature guitars, an Onyx Black PIA (named after his wife). "It was the most gorgeous instrument I'd seen," Vai recalls. "I picked it up and my heart was breaking, because I wanted to play it but couldn't." Then the guitarist was seized by a mad idea: Why not simply play it with his left hand? "I always toyed with the idea of writing a song with just one hand. Lo and behold, I was put in a situation where it was either do that or do nothing. So out of this came a new song — 'Knappsack.'"

Last year, Vai released a video of himself performing the song. It's an astonishing clip that captures the guitarist — his right shoulder held immobile in the Knappsack — effortlessly playing one-handed over a galloping rhythm, executing everything from hammer-ons and pull-offs, gorgeous legato lines and wicked whammy bar dives, all of it *sans* pick.

"At first I thought, 'It's cheesy novelty stuff,'" he says. "Just as quickly, I thought, 'Why not?' We had everything set up in a way that I could navigate through it all myself, and I thought it would be interesting to film it. I laid down a click track, we turned the cameras on, and I started building the track, doing little pieces at a time. There's some cheating going on, maybe 20 or 30 seconds. I built the song around the guitar and my desire to play it with one hand."

Once he recovered from shoulder surgery, Vai returned to his acoustic album, but it wasn't long till he faced a new problem. While working on a song, he fell into a meditative state while holding what he describes as "a very obtuse chord."

"I was really trying to focus on the picking and getting every note right," he says. "This went on for about 20 minutes, and after I released my hand I noticed my left thumb really hurt. I thought I had just strained it and that the pain would go away." Only it didn't, and a month later, Vai's thumb started to twitch involuntarily and freeze up. "They call it 'trigger finger,' and for me, it meant that I couldn't play."

He went under the knife a second time, this time to repair the flexor tendon in his thumb ("a very easy procedure, thankfully"), and after he had healed he again went back

Vai with an Ibanez PIA in Onyx Black, one of his main *Inviolate* guitars

"It was the most gorgeous instrument I'd seen. I picked it up and my heart was breaking, because

I WANTED TO PLAY IT BUT COULDN'T"

Vai with an Ibanez PIA in Sun Dew Gold. "Your spirit, so to speak, is inviolate," he says when discussing the title of his new album (*Inviolate*, the cover of which is shown below). "It cannot be touched or harmed"

"At that point, I thought, 'OK, this is what it feels like at the end of the road. I'm going to have to retire

FROM THE THING I LOVE'"

to work on his acoustic album. One of the pieces he attempted to record required very brisk strumming, and Vai discovered that his right hand wasn't cooperating — as in, there was nothing there. "It was like I couldn't connect with the pick," he says. "At that point, I thought, 'OK, this is what it feels like at the end of the road. I'm going to have to retire from the thing I love."

That thought lasted "about five seconds," and then another voice took over and Vai told himself, "Shut the fuck up and start practicing your ass off. That's the voice I always listen to, and it's the correct voice.

I just started playing and playing, and it all came back."

He put the acoustic album on the shelf (for now) and turned his attention to creating a new batch of electric instrumental songs that would form *Inviolate*. The album, Vai's 10th proper studio recording (not counting compilations), is a major work of art, as important a statement as what is generally regarded as his masterpiece, *Passion and Warfare*. Clocking in at around the 45-minute mark (designed to fit on a single vinyl album), it's one of his shortest recent releases, but what he says in that time limit

is nothing less than remarkable.

The album starts out with an inferno — "Teeth of the Hydra" — that comes at you from all directions, violent and unforgiving, full of slashing, jarring chords that feel like uppercuts to the body; yet there are moments of blissful, woozy eroticism — breathtaking harp glissandos and trippy legato melodies — that give off a pulsating and warm glow. For Vai, who performed the song on a whacked-out, three-necked guitar of his own design, it's a personal triumph, one that will leave listeners slack-jawed.

"Zeus in Chains" is an equally disorienting, surrealistic thrill ride. Over a gnashing rhythm, Vai dispatches turbulent riffs, soaring melodies and extravagant displays of fretboard prestidigitation that take flight into a hallucinatory fever dream. Before we've had a chance to recover, the guitarist changes things up with "Little Pretty." "Think Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf," Vai says of this spunky, jazz-tinged gem, and true to his description, it's both charming and dangerous, brimming with spine-tingling arpeggios over odd-time changes that cast a seductive spell.

There's high point after high point: On the spacey extravaganza "Apollo in Color," Vai's elastic soloing is highly entertaining poetic drama, and he conducts a guitar exorcism on the relentless rocker "Avalanche." While he admits to keeping the blues at something of an arm's distance, his "Greenish Blues, with its mélange of radiant colors and emotions, is deeply involving stuff untethered by conformity. Vai calls "Knappsack" and the frisky country-jazz-flavored "Candle Power" (an earlier cut on which he plays *sans* pick or whammy bar) the "two orphans" of the album, but they feel fully integrated, as does the deliciously vibey closing track, "Sandman Cloud Mist," which had its origins at a 2019 soundcheck. After taking listeners on a dizzying and intense journey, he sets them free, off into the vapors.

For Vai, who utilized the talents of an ace group of players (they include drummers Terry Bozzio, Vinnie Colaiuta and Jeremy Colson, as well as bassists Billy Sheehan, Philip Bynoe Henrik Linder and Bryan Beller, among others), *Inviolate* represents something of a grand summation of where he's been musically, but it's also aspirational. "As an artist, I try to relish the joy of marching forward with my creative intentions. I always want to go somewhere new," he says. "At the same time, the ego comes in and I want people to like it." He laughs. "It's like the two thoughts are in my head, and I'm always trying to reconcile them."

It's interesting that you titled the album *Inviolate*, which means "safe from injury or violation." For a time, you were facing both.

Well, yes, but see, we can get into Vai-isms. Basically, you know that my creative meanderings sometimes circle around spiritual concepts and things. So, OK, there's the world stage that we believe is what's really happening, and for many of us, that's the truth. But there's something else going on, and that's the human spirit. The human spirit is inviolate. It doesn't contain the neuroses of conditioned thinking that the world is basically a slave to. It's part of everybody. You're not your body; you're your awareness. Your awareness is untouchable by anything in this world, because it's not part of this world. Your body is part of this world. So your spirit, so to speak, is inviolate. It cannot be touched or harmed.

There you go. Let me ask you, once you had to shift gears away from the acoustic album, did you have a clear agenda for what you would do on this record?

Good question. In the past, I would try to exaggerate the record's presentation with stories and concepts. When I came out of the surgery, I had a tour and a release date coming up, and I just sort of jumped into these songs that I had. It was almost like not planning, but navigating in the moment of inspiration. Take a song like "Apollo in Color." It may sound a little fusion-y, but for me, it was a melody that I had on the shelf for years. Every time I'd come across it, it would scream out, "Please record me." So that was the criteria. I went for the best ideas that needed to be birthed in that moment.

Much of it wasn't planned, like "Candle Power" and "Knappsack." With "Candle Power," I had this concept for doing a song that was different from how I normally approach a song: It was a clean guitar, no whammy bar, and I was using my fingers to pick. All very abnormal for me, and I'm not a good finger picker. But I wanted to challenge myself.

Did recording that song make you think you rely too much on heavy distortion and the whammy bar?

Not really. I like my style. I like the tone and the quirkiness of my playing. Heavy distortion, delay, whammy bar antics — that's what I like.

Obviously, there's benefits to having your own studio; you can always get in. But is there a downside to being there too much? Do you ever have to tell yourself, "Step away from the console, Steve"?

Nope. This is where I love to be. It's my jam. I've always had studios at my homes; otherwise, I wouldn't have a family life.

Let's talk about "Teeth of the Hydra" — but we also have to talk about that guitar.

The guitar... I'm very fortunate in that whatever ridiculous ideas that come into my head, the people at Ibanez can make them real. I was thinking of the movie *Mad Max*; there's a scene in which this guy is playing the guitar on the front of a truck. I started to think, "I want to build a guitar that has an alien-like vibe, but with three necks and harp strings. And I'm going to create a piece of music that uses all of them." It came to me in a flash. I was looking into steampunk at the time.

That was the idea. The top neck is a 12-string, and half of it is fretless. Then there's a seven-string neck, and there's a bass neck with the E and A strings being fretless. I took the idea to Hoshino and mentioned "steampunk." A short while later, they sent me a rendition and some illustrations, and it went from there. They added some accoutrements — some I asked for; others they put on. It's got piezos, sustainers, lights, sample and hold features. It started about five years ago, but the whole thing probably took a year and a half. I was stunned that they could make the thing.

Did you know what to do with it right away?

It sat in the studio for a year. I'd walk past it and go, "One of these days, you're mine. I know what I'm going to do. We're going to do it together."

Are you playing the Hydra throughout the song in one live pass?

Each section is live, but I didn't do it entirely in one pass. I was writing it and building it as I was going. You know, we created this makeshift stand for the guitar; the thing is really heavy. But we designed this waist strap that holds it, so all the weight is on your hips and not your shoulders. The whole thing is so funny. I would sit with the guitar and just look at it like, "What are you thinking? How are you going to do this?" And then there's that other part that says, "Shut the fuck up and just do it." If you want to do something impossible, you just have to start doing it.

There are many brilliant elements in the song. Those brutal chords jump out so forcefully.

Thank you. Everything you hear on that song — with the exception of keyboards and percussion samples — is the Hydra. The goal was to have a piece of music that doesn't sound like it's being performed on a novelty instrument, or that it's a disjunctive melody. When you see how I performed this piece, it's so entertaining, because I had to negotiate the left-hand pull-offs so that the melody sounds uninterrupted — like a real melody. It was crazy, but I did slowly, a section at a time. It took two months.

You used a Gretsch on "Little Pretty."

An Anniversary model. I've always liked

Besides his signature Ibanez PIA (this one boasts a custom swirl paint job by David Bonvillain, by the way), *Inviolate* also shows off the Hydra, a Gretsch Anniversary model, a FLO III and a custom Strat-style guitar built for Vai

"I watch the video and I think, 'How did you do that? How the hell are you going to negotiate

ALL THESE GUITAR PARTS?

You can't. You're not going to be able to do it'"

Gretsches for their sound, but they're not really my jam. Still, I had this riff and I thought, "It has to be played on a Gretsch." They're beasts, those guitars. For me, they're hard to play. They put up a fight, but that's the challenge.

I love the odd changes in the song, especially in the solo section.

The solo section is a killer. I sat down and said, "You're going to create changes that in and of themselves sound great together, but every single chord change is a completely different synthetic mode." There's nothing conventional in those changes, and they're death-defying to solo over. I didn't want to sound like I was soloing over jazz changes. A lot of bad jazz is people outlining chords at the speed of light, and that just doesn't do it for me. I hear fusion-y type playing that just follows chords and theoretical absolutes. That's fine, but it doesn't push my button. With that solo, I said to myself, "This has to be musical and melodic, but it has to work in these chord changes that are so bizarre."

Before our interview, you told me about "Greenish Blues" and said, "It's my take on the blues. It's the closest I desire to come to it." You have to elaborate on that, because as you know, blues is at the root of rock music.

And yes, it's at the root of everything I do. The first scale I ever learned, and everything that I do, is based off of that scale and manipulations of it. But as far as conventional blues, when I was younger, I wasn't a big fan. I was more into rock. As I got older, I started to appreciate the blues when it's performed very authentically. But I was never very authentic at it. I never saw myself as an authentic blues or jazz or fusion or even rock player. When I decided to do "Greenish Blues," it originated at a sound check. We just started playing and things happened. I liked it, so I decided to do it in the studio. And I just told myself, "Don't try to be authentically blues."

But what's authentic?

All of the blues-type playing that people believe is approved and appropriate. Like, if you listen to Stevie Ray Vaughan, that's incredibly good rock blues. Oddly enough, I was walking through the house the other day, and there was some blues playing. The guitar playing was really good and tasty. It was John Mayer.

The guy can play.

Yeah, but I don't do any of that stuff, and I don't want to try. As I said, "Greenish Blues" is the closest I care to come. It would be inauthentic for me to try to do what those guys do. I'm not good at it. If you had my weird, quirky instincts, would you choose to try to sound like something that's been done a million times by people who breathe it?

But isn't the point to take it somewhere else, like, say, Jimi Hendrix?

Yes, but Hendrix took it to where it was comfortable for him. And I kind of took it to wherever it went for me. Let me ask you, when you listen to "Greenish Blues," what do you hear?

I hear spirit... joy... excitement. I hear

somebody telling me a story.
There you go. Thank you. And if I tried to sound more authentic to the blues, we'd miss all that.

Fair enough. Let me ask you about "Knappsack." When you eventually play the song live, are you going to do it all with one hand?
[*Laughs*] I was afraid you were going to ask that. I have mountains of guitar work to do for this tour. "Teeth of the Hydra," "Candle Power"... it took weeks to get that riff. Then there's "Knappsack." I watch the video and I think, "How did you do that? How the hell are you going to negotiate all these guitar parts? You can't. You're not going to be able to do it."

And then that other voice comes in and says, "Shut the fuck up and just do it." For "Knappsack," the vast majority of it will be on one hand. If I use my right hand at all, it'll be to mute strings in certain parts. One of the other things you don't see in the video, for some of those riffs I used the Sustainer. That's where all that sustain came from, on some of those really fast, Indian-style finger legato things.

"Sandman Cloud Mist" is so beautiful and vibey. Like "Knappsack" and "Candle Power," you had parts of it earlier, right?
Yeah, it was just a chord progression that I wrote for the Big Mama Jama Jamathon [*which took place in 2018*]. And then I was doing a video demonstration about delay. I do this Patreon thing that I really enjoy — it's like a holding tank for creative ideas. One of them is an episode in which we go deep into all the parameters on how to build delay, where it sits in a signal chain, all that stuff. To demonstrate heavy delay, on one of the patches I recorded and videotaped about 20 minutes of playing over a vamp.

I edited it down and really liked the way it sounded. It was a different kind of a voice to me, because most of the time, when I'm building something in the studio, I work on it, work on it. I tweak and refine, and then I go, "OK, it's good." There was none of that with "Sandman Cloud Mist." It was pure playing in the legato style that I do. But I didn't want to use a loop, so I had Vinnie Colaiuta lay down the most beautiful drum track. It gave him an opportunity to do some polyrhythmic playing that I don't think he gets much of a chance to do on his conventional big gigs.

Besides the guitars we talked about, which other models did you use on the record?
Other than the Hydra, the Onyx Black PIA, the Gretsch... On "Knappsack," I used FLO III with a Sustainer. On some things I used a Strat-type guitar that Ibanez made for me. I'm a big Strat fan from my childhood, and I've got a great little collection. They're not vintage, but they're ones that I've kind of collected. Strats are hard for me to play, and they don't really suit my style entirely. I'm fortunate in that I can I call Ibanez and say, "Can you make me a Strat that suits my style?" They'll build something, but it will never really be a Strat.

As you get older, would you say you've noticed your playing evolving in any important ways?
It's funny how things work out. It's all mental. I think naturally, as we grow older, our perspectives change. We can go from a very progressive mentality to a more conservative one, but you can retain aspects of all of them. You just do them differently. I don't feel the need to have to blow up every song. You know what I mean?

You're now in your 60s. With age, do you feel the urge to be more prolific?
That curse plagued me for a good part of my life. Strangely enough, again, for the last five to eight years, it's also dissolved. There will never be enough for the ego. You'll never be able to satisfy the unending thirst to express yourself creatively. It won't go away, but the feeling that you've got to get it all out now is panic mode. What matters is how you feel the moment you're creating music — or whatever you're doing. If you're looking for it in the future, it's never going to come, because you're always looking for it in the future.

When I turned 50, I looked at all of the lists of projects I've accumulated through the years that I wanted to accomplish, and I realized they were pipe dreams and fantasies. I could do one project a year, and the reality was, I had 100 of them. And I just thought, "OK, you have to rethink this, Steve. You've been doing your best to be creative, and what's been coming out is pretty appropriate for the time. So just continue. Don't worry about all the stuff you want to release that isn't going to be released, because it's all contained in each project you do." I think that makes sense.

How do you feel about finally hitting the road again?
I'm excited to get out there, more than I ever have been. This is going to be the most challenging tour, for many reasons. But you know, I used to fill myself with stress: "Are you at your best? Are you giving people everything you can?" Sometimes it almost made me want to put off going on tour. Like everybody, I had to cancel and postpone all sorts of gigs because of the pandemic, and I was totally fine with it. I've been a touring musician for 41 years — long time. But a little while ago, I got the itch to go back out. Because the reality is, I love touring. I get to see the world with a traveling family, and most of the time — like, 90 percent of the time — it's pure fun. I get to go to different places and taste different cultures. In my younger days, I didn't always appreciate it. That started to get to me, and I thought, "There's going to come a day when I won't be able to tour, and that will be a sadder day for me than the day my fingers say, 'I'm done with you.'" So I'm excited to feel that pull once again. GW

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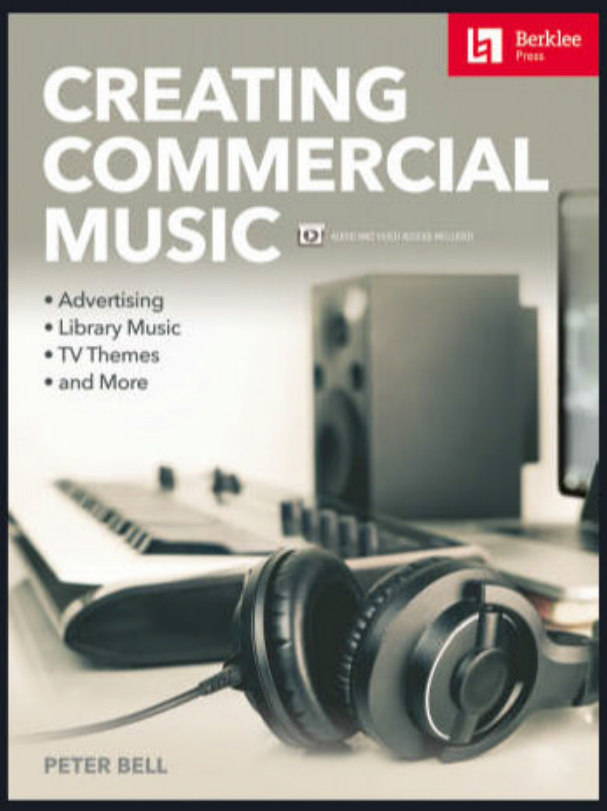

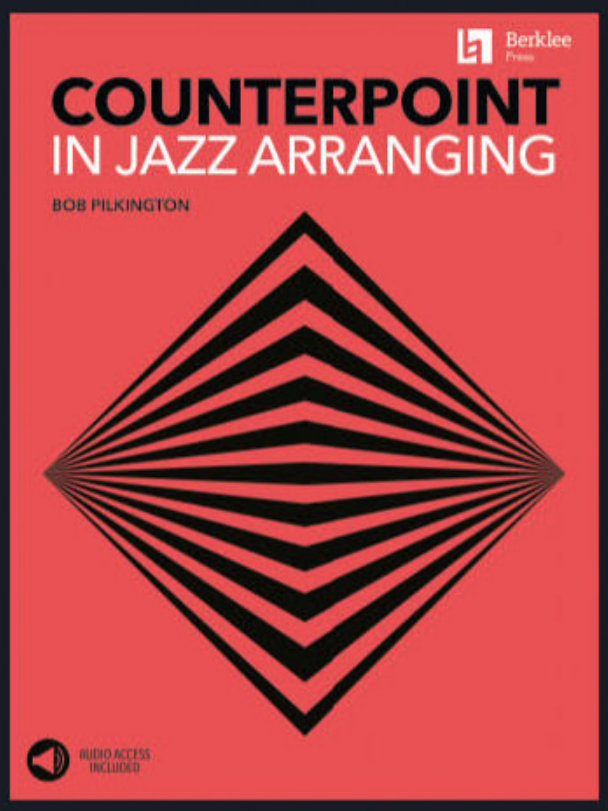

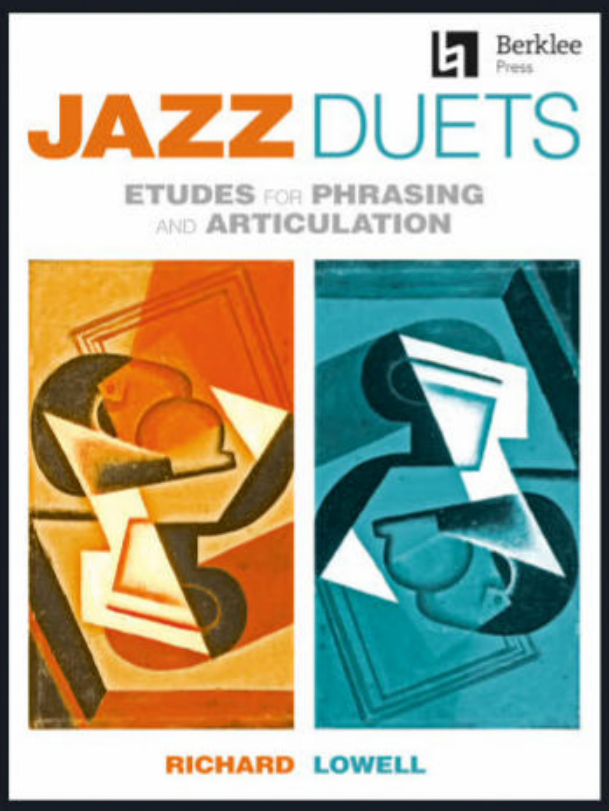

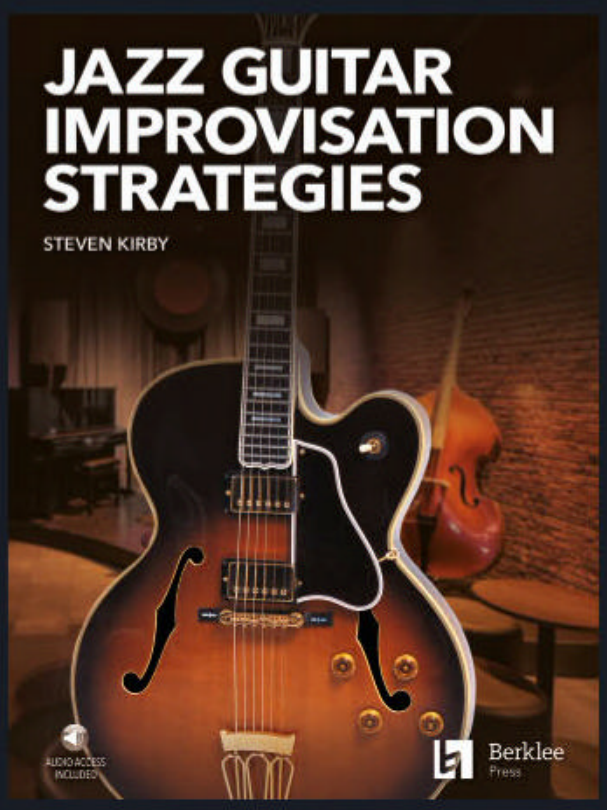

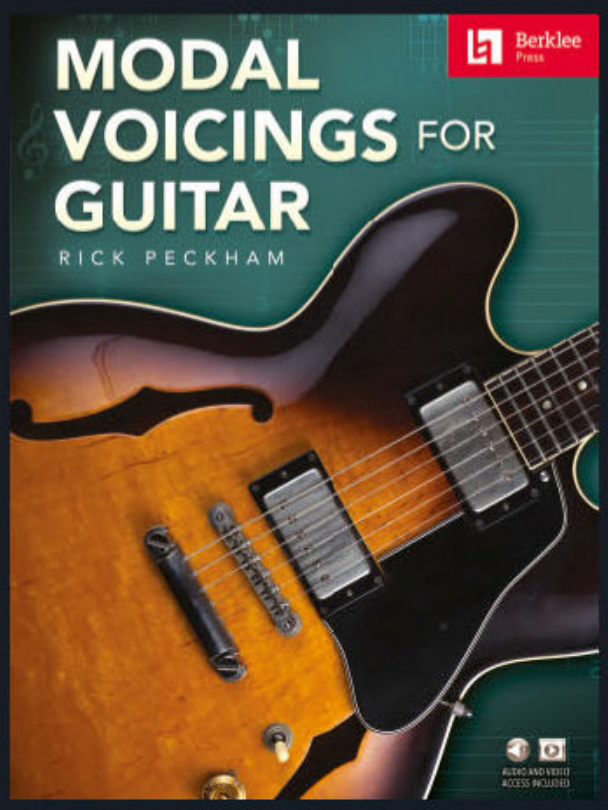

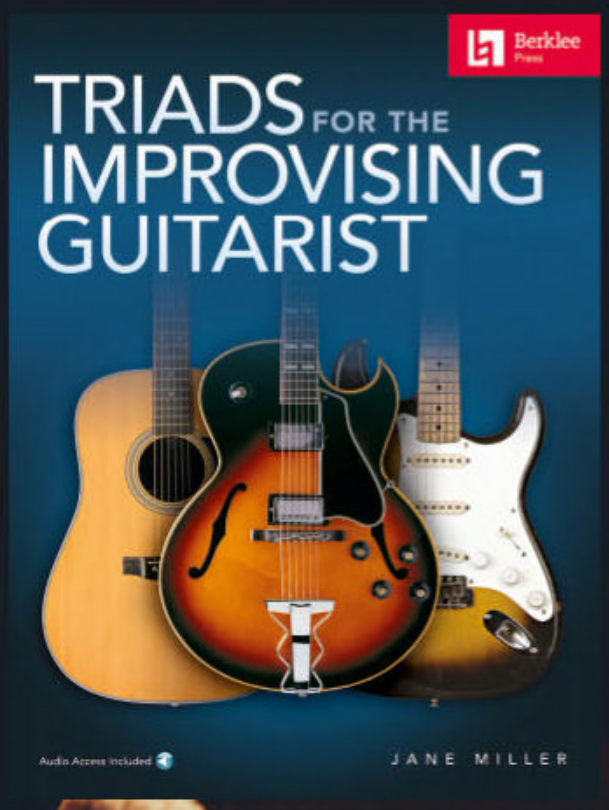

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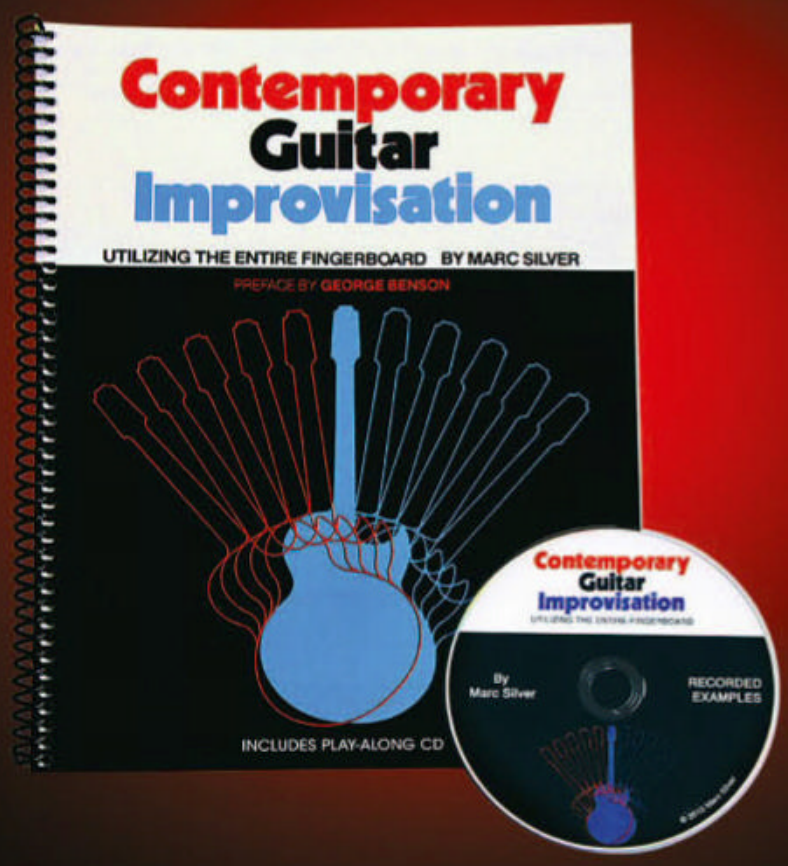

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TALLING THE SCORE: COBRA KAI

HOW LEO BIRENBERG AND ZACH ROBINSON – COMPOSERS ON NETFLIX'S BLOCKBUSTER SERIES, *COBRA KAI* – CRAFT THE PERFECT (NOT TO MENTION BADASS!) EIGHTIES-STYLE SCORE

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To be sure, that's one road to success in the music industry. But there are, of course, many others to travel. Just ask Leo Birenberg and Zach Robinson, two musicians who have built thriving careers as composers and scorers for film and TV, and for the last few years, have created all the original music for the breakout Netflix series *Cobra Kai*.

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

JAMES CLARK

Leo Birenberg [*left*] and Zach Robinson perform June 12, 2019, as part of "Enter the Dojo: The Music of *Cobra Kai* Live" at West Hollywood's Whisky a Go Go

Birenberg [*left*] and Robinson at the Whisky a Go Go; "Growing up in L.A., I was a metal head — your standard classic-rock-into-metal guitar player," Robinson says. "That type of music is in L.A.'s DNA"

The show, as everyone with an internet connection knows by now, is an update of the 1984 blockbuster *The Karate Kid*, and revisits the titular star, Daniel LaRusso (played by Ralph Macchio) and his hard-living, hard-drinking, hair-metal-loving high-school karate nemesis Johnny Lawrence (William "Billy" Zabka) in the present day as two (ostensibly) grown men navigating life, love and middle age — and who still want to kick each other's asses *hard*. During two seasons on YouTube, *Cobra Kai* shattered records, with Season 1 named the world's most in-demand streaming television show during May 2018. After moving to Netflix for Season 3, *Cobra Kai* became, for a period, the most viewed original series on a streaming platform.

And while the warring senseis, nostalgia-soaked relationships and comically over-the-top toxic masculinity are what keeps fans coming back season after season, *Cobra Kai* is, in many ways, held together by its music. Throughout the episodes, Daniel and Johnny's individual hero's journeys are soundtracked by a dynamic, innovative and downright fun score that is grounded in Eighties rock and hair metal, and then ornamented with everything from orchestral music and traditional eastern flutes and strings to modern synth wave, heavy metal and video game sounds. In fact, the score has garnered enough of its own fanbase that, following Season 2, Birenberg and Robinson, with a little help from some friends (including Johnny Lawrence himself), took the most well-known compositions to the stage of the famed Whisky a Go Go in Hollywood for a live performance of *Cobra Kai*'s greatest hits.

"IN HIS HEAD, [JOHNNY LAWRENCE] IS THE ULTIMATE BADASS, RIGHT? SO 'STRIKE FIRST' CAME OUT AS SOMETHING THAT WE THINK REPRESENTS JOHNNY'S VERSION OF KICKING ASS"

– ZACH ROBINSON

Birenberg and Robinson boast extensive resumes in the scoring world, but they're also quick to acknowledge that working on a show with such rich history and, let's face it, ties to badass music (what child of the Eighties can't sing the chorus to "You're the Best" or "Cruel Summer"?) is a dream come true. "It's like the Hollywood story that never happens in Hollywood," Birenberg says. On the eve of the premiere of *Cobra Kai*'s highly anticipated Season 4, the two sat down with *Guitar World* to detail how it all came to be.

How did you get involved with *Cobra Kai*?

LEO BIRENBERG It's a dream story, which is that we read about *Cobra Kai* in the trades, either *Variety* or *Hollywood Reporter*, and there wasn't any real information — it just said there was a show being made called *Cobra Kai*, and somehow it's related to the

Karate Kid IP. There was no cast announced or anything. But the article did say the show was going to be on YouTube Premium, and Zach and I had just done a show on YouTube Premium and we were looking for a next gig. And we were like, "This seems kind of like our jam..." So we put a reel together and sent it to our agent and said, "Hey, we don't know anything about this, but it feels like the right vibe for us. Can you get it in the hands of whoever needs to see it?"

A lot of times when you do that, you never hear about a gig ever again; it just goes off into the void and you have no idea until the show comes out two years later. But somehow the wires crossed in serendipity, because someone over at Sony called our agents to talk about *Cobra Kai*. And our agent was like, "Wait, these guys really want to do the show — I have a reel!" He sent it over and got in the hands of the *Cobra Kai* show runners and creators, and I guess we nailed the vibe because they called us in for a meeting. And it was super-clear we were on the same page. Then they sent us some scripts and it was even better than Zach and I could have possibly imagined. First of all, Billy [*Zabka*] and Ralph [*Macchio*] were in it. And also, the vibe of the show, it hits that perfect tone of being reverential but also self-aware. So we had a great bonding session with the guys and they hired us like 15 minutes after the meeting ended.

Did your initial reel consist of the type of music you thought the *Cobra Kai* team would want to hear? Given the subject matter, I imagine there was an Eighties rock vibe.

ZACH ROBINSON Yeah, part of it was. We had actually put the reel together before reading the scripts. As Leo said, this was a total blind reel; we knew nothing about this show. This was just what we felt in our hearts that this music should be. We've both worked on big Hollywood movies — we used to work for a composer named Christophe Beck, and we wrote music for action movies like *Edge of Tomorrow* and *Ant-Man,* so we put some of that on, too. So the scope of the reel ranged from hard rock stuff to orchestral material, like that classic, symphonic film score sound, and all based off *The Karate Kid*. But I think the thing that separated us from anyone else that would have submitted was that we really leaned into the Eighties-ness of it. You know, we had some Eighties montage tracks that we had done as joke, because every comedy has an Eighties montage, right? But we were like, "This is where we do it for real."

BIRENBERG That was a major part of our pitch.

ROBINSON I also had an electronic music project in the early 2010s, like a solo electronic music project that was kind of synth wave before it was called synth wave. And there was some of that on there as well. So it was like, "We do Eighties rock stuff. We do Eighties synth stuff. And we also do film scores!"

LEFT: JAMES CLARK RIGHT: COURTESY OF IMPACT24 PR

"I lean more toward the Def Leppards, the Whitesnakes, the Van Halens," Billy Zabka says. "I'm all things Eighties rock. That was my music"

SERIOUS CHOPS

Billy Zabka – aka Johnny Lawrence, *Cobra Kai*'s resident badass sensei – has been playing guitar since he was a hair-metal-lovin' kid (BTW, he's still a hair-metal-lovin' kid!)

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

ONE OF THE very first scenes in the very first episode of *Cobra Kai* depicts Johnny Lawrence, former karate badass (to use Johnny's favorite descriptor) and walking 1980s artifact, hopping into his beat-up red Pontiac Firebird and cranking up Poison's glam-metal anthem "Nothin' But a Good Time."

It's one of many Eighties rock-soundtracked moments we're treated to, courtesy of the soon-to-be sensei: Throughout the first three seasons, Johnny unapologetically rocks a Zebra *No Tellin' Lies* baseball tee, inspires his teenaged karate disciple, Miguel Diaz, to change his ringtone to Ratt's "Round and Round" and, later on, sneaks Diaz into a Dee Snider concert as physical therapy for a (literally) back-breaking injury. Clearly, Johnny Lawrence loves hair metal.

But what about the real-life actor who plays him, Billy Zabka?

"Yes, Billy Zabka does love hair metal," confirms Billy Zabka himself, speaking to *Guitar World* via Zoom after wrapping shooting for *Cobra Kai*'s new fourth season. "I lean more toward the Def Leppards, the Whitesnakes, the Van Halens. I'm all things Eighties rock. That was my music."

That music, Zabka reveals, was there with him the day he auditioned for the role of Johnny Lawrence — his first-ever film appearance, by the way — in the original *The Karate Kid*. He recalls being in his late teens and driving to the audition in his father's Volvo, blasting Dio's "Rainbow in the Dark." "I got there, walked into this room with all these karate black belts, and everybody was out Johnny-ing the next guy," he says. "It was tense, and the energy pushed me back out of the room and into my dad's Volvo. And I sat there with my little cassette player and cranked up some Zebra. It helped me to not get psyched out."

Zabka landed the role, of course. But more than that, he inhabited it so fully — imbuing Johnny with a depth and pathos that turned him into a sort of anti-hero — that he went on to play hot-tempered bad boys in a slew of Eighties flicks, including the 1985 high-school caper *Just One of the Guys* and the 1986 Rodney Dangerfield vehicle *Back to School*. Additionally, Zabka continued to act in film and television, began directing commercials and music videos and also became an Academy Award-nominated writer and producer.

But before he did any of this, Zabka played guitar. In fact, he calls the instrument "the theme of my life since I was 10 years

You guys clearly aren't old enough to have actually grown up in the Eighties. Is this music that you truly love, or do you just have a knowledge of and appreciation for it from a distance?

BIRENBERG For me, it's more like one of many types of music I listen to. I'm really all over the place in my music background; I grew up playing saxophone and clarinet and flute, and I was heavy into jazz. My guitar-loving background comes much more from a Pat Metheny place than like a hard rock place. So my aesthetic is less pure hard rock.

ROBINSON It's music that I love. Growing up in L.A., I was a metal head — your standard classic-rock-into-metal guitar player. That's kind of a rite of passage there, because that type of music is in L.A.'s DNA. Later on I got into film scores and all that, but I've always had a soft spot for the Eighties aesthetic.

For those of us unfamiliar with scoring, can you walk us through your process?

BIRENBERG The process is pretty similar for each episode. We sit down with the showrunners and have a meeting — it's called a spotting session — and we'll watch episodes. We usually work on two at a time, so we watch them together and go through every scene with the editors and say, "Should there be music here? What's the music going to be like?" And we just make a list: "Okay, here we need some emotional stuff, here we have a big fight sequence, here we've got this, here we've got that." Then Zach and I split off and start sketching things out. We'll go into our separate studios and start working. Once things are listenable and put together we start trading files, trading mixes and piling on ideas. A really good example would be [*the composition*] "Strike First," which plays during a scene in Season 1, Episode 1, where Johnny beats up some kids in a mini-mart parking lot. In a lot of ways that was our thesis statement for the show.

How did that one come together?

ROBINSON In terms of "Strike First," which is also the music that plays during the end credits of each episode, we watched this scene of Johnny beating the crap out of these teenagers, and our first thought was, "We want the music to feel like the music that Johnny hears in his head while he's doing that." And in his head, he's the ultimate badass, right? So "Strike First" came out as something that we think represents Johnny's version of kicking ass. But it's sort of our version, too. We grew up in the Nineties, with influences that range from everything from hair metal to video game music. So there's that kind of video game, "boss battle" feel to it.

There's some great guitar on that one.

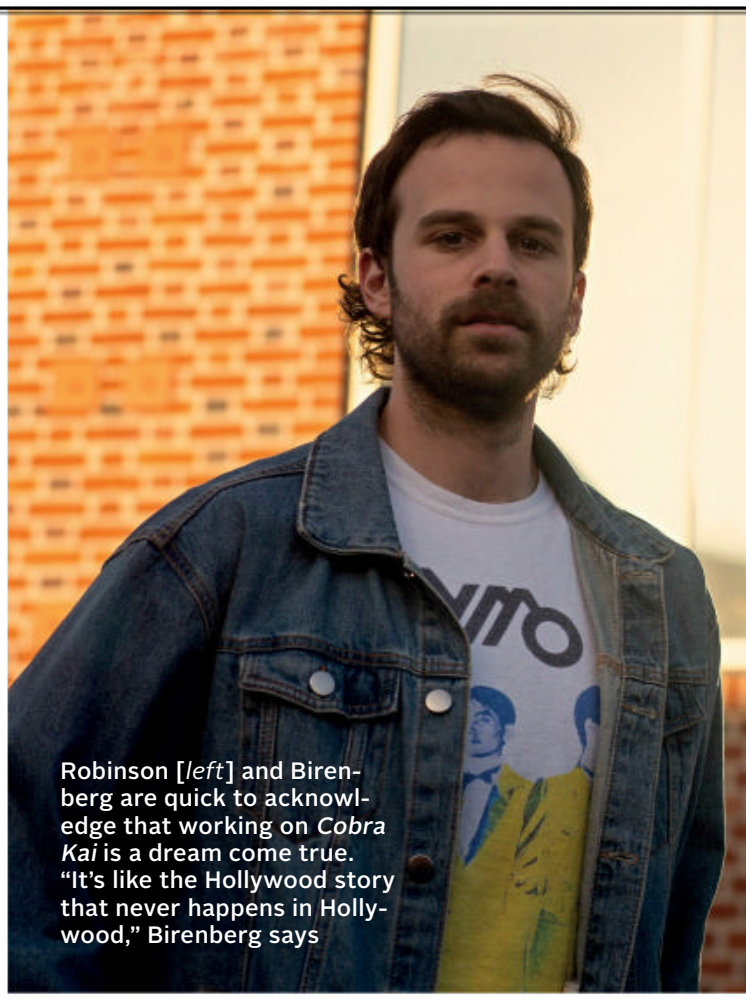
ROBINSON Something that I think we do on our show that I don't think anyone else does is that we're pretty unabashed with our guitar usage, and we lean hard into lead guitar in our score. We're very into shredding and treating the guitar the way Yngwie Malmsteen or Eddie Van Halen would treat a guitar, which is as a virtuosic, symphonic instrument. So there's a lot of moments — in "Strike First," or in "King Cobra," which ends Season 1, or "Miyagi Metal," which ends Season 3 — where we really highlight the guitar. As we're writing, we make it a point to say, "We want to add guitar flourishes here." And sometimes we don't even write the parts. We'll work with amazing guitar players like Andrew Synoweic, a session player in Los Angeles, and Myrone — he calls himself a "soft shredder," and he's very video game influenced — and we'll say, "You're a master shredder. We want to hit this moment on screen with some type of arpeggio or shred lick," or whatever.

As a fan of the show and also of Eighties rock, I'd imagine that scoring for the Johnny Lawrence character has to be incredibly fun.

BIRENBERG It is. And in a lot of ways Johnny is the heart of the show. Or at least the show in Season 1. So originally it was really Johnny's lens that was our main lens. Which is why we call "Strike First" kind of our thesis statement: "This is the sound, guys." That was the first thing we unlocked. Then we had to figure out the whole palette: you have the badass rock stuff, the spiritual Miyagi stuff, the more electro-influenced sounds... And then we also went back to the music in the original movies and sort of re-consumed that. We asked, "What is it that makes this tick?" And one thing we noticed is that the music that made the biggest impression on audiences in the original movie wasn't the score. It was all the songs that were in there, like "You're the Best"...

"THEN THEY SENT US SOME SCRIPTS, AND IT WAS EVEN BETTER THAN ZACH AND I COULD HAVE POSSIBLY IMAGINED. FIRST OF ALL, *BILLY [ZABKA] AND RALPH [MACCHIO] WERE IN IT!*"

– LEO BIRENBERG



Robinson [*left*] and Birenberg are quick to acknowledge that working on *Cobra Kai* is a dream come true. "It's like the Hollywood story that never happens in Hollywood," Birenberg says

Bananarama's "Cruel Summer"...

BIRENBERG Right. "Young Hearts"... So we basically wanted our score to absorb that song functionality in a lot of ways, and play with the type of energy that those needle drops play with in the movie. That's kind of how we came up with our sound and the approach to mixing the genres in scoring.

The music is not merely a throwback to the Eighties and the original *Karate Kid*. You also bring in a lot of modern sounds, in particular when you're scoring for the teenagers, who obviously don't sit around all day listening to Ratt and Poison. I'm thinking in particular about the score to the big brawl at the high school during the final episode of Season Two.

ROBINSON "Hallway Hellscape" [*the piece of music that soundtracks the high-school brawl*] was just a really fun one because we got to go all out — it almost feels like a fight in *The Matrix* or something. But in general when it comes to the kids, one of the ideas we had from the start was that the music they were hearing was going to be kind of influenced by their sensei. So for instance, the score for Miguel, during the cafeteria fight in the first season, it's what he hears when he gets the Johnny Lawrence filter put on him. How does his own personality blend with, like, Ratt, and all this other music that Johnny is exposing him to? That actually became more complicated to do as the show went on because the kids were switching dojos all the time. By the end of Season 2, it's like, who the fuck are you rooting for on this show? [*Laughs*] But what we ended up with for the kids is this kind of

middle ground where we took the synth-pop Eighties elements from the original *Karate Kid* soundtrack and mixed them with Johnny's hair metal and a few other things. And you wind up with a modern EDM-inspired metal hybrid piece of music, which doesn't feel that far from stuff that you'd hear nowadays from artists like Carpenter Brut or Perturbator.

All right, now for the important stuff: Clearly, Johnny Lawrence is a big fan of Ratt, Zebra and Twisted Sister. What are Leo and Zach's favorite Eighties hard rock and metal bands?
BIRENBERG [*Laughs*] I love Bon Jovi. I listened to so much Bon Jovi in high school. I don't even know how I got into it, but it was a major part of my high school life.
ROBINSON I would have to say Iron Maiden, because it got me into guitar. So there's always a soft spot for that. And then Van Halen — I love Eighties Van Halen. Especially late-Eighties Van Halen.

You're a Van Hagar man.
ROBINSON I mean, I love David Lee Roth, too. But I listen to the Hagar stuff and I'm like, "This is good music!"

How did each of you get into the composing and scoring world? Was that your initial goal, or did you start out wanting to be performers?
BIRENBERG I think I had that performing dream for a bit. And then sometime late in high school I just realized that what made me tick was less about me being the person performing and more about me bossing everybody around and telling them what to play. [*Laughs*] But like I said earlier, I played saxophone, and my high school had a big jazz program. That was what first led me to look at scores. Then later on I went to NYU [*New*

LEFT: SAM MULLER RIGHT: JAMES CLARK

Zabka [*left*] and Robinson at the Whisky a Go Go in 2019. "The guitar's a companion, just like it always has been," Zabka says. "It's just part of life for me"

old." It was at that age that he first picked up the instrument, having just moved with his family from New York to Southern California. "It was a way to try and fit in and meet some friends," he says. "I would go to a little park, Shadow Ranch [*in the San Fernando Valley*] and learn guitar with a bunch of guys and a nylon-string."

He continued to play throughout his school years, including at his high school Battle of the Bands in El Camino Real, where his group, Siricon ("a silly, funny name") had some stiff competition. "We played against Fishbone," Zabka recalls with a laugh. "Angelo Moore, John Fisher, I went to high school with those guys, and they were running around onstage with horns, playing all this crazy jazz and fusion type music that no one had ever heard before."

In fact, Zabka continues, "Here's an even crazier story: In junior high school Angelo lived across the street from me, and when they first started the band, they didn't have a lot of instruments. So I had a little keyboard, I had an amplifier, and they would come and use my stuff and I would jam with them." (When reached by phone, Moore recalls, "I remember going over to his house, kickin' it and playing games and running up and down the street. Childhood memories, man...")

Zabka obviously didn't pursue music with the same zealousness as his Fishbone school mates (or, for that matter, his father, Stan Zabka, a successful pianist and composer who co-wrote the 1950s holiday classic "Christmas Eve in My Hometown" and later worked for and performed on *The Tonight Show*), but he did take it seriously. He enrolled at the Dick Grove School of Music in California, where he learned to read music and studied to be a trained session player and studio musician, and he also played in a series of bands, including one with a few friends called the Acoustic Outlaws. "We'd perform at pumpkin festivals and things like that, where we're sitting on haystacks singing 'Listen to the Music' and 'Layla,' " he recalls.

Zabka says that he "loved guitar deeply," but at the same time, "it was always something of a hobby. I went to college at Cal State Northridge and entered the film school, and then I got cast in *The Karate Kid*. So as far as my career was going, I was headed to film. But music was the other thing that fed me artistically and creatively. And that's also why I never chose not to pursue it professionally — it's something I don't look to get anything back from, outside of just the joy of doing it."

That's not to say he doesn't find the time to bring the guitar into his acting life whenever possible. On the set of *Back to School*, for just one example, Zabka recalls impromptu jam sessions with co-star Robert Downey Jr. at their hotel after full days of shooting in Madison, Wisconsin. "I would always bring my guitar to any set I went to, and [*Downey*] happened to bring a Casio with him. So we did a little jamming. And he's a great piano player, actually."

In 2019, Zabka had the opportunity to live out his rock dreams by performing to a packed audience at Hollywood's famed Whisky a Go Go (Johnny Lawrence, we presume, would be super-jealous). Armed with a Taylor acoustic (his other gear over the years has included a Takamine acoustic-electric, a white Ovation 12-string and a "chestnut-brown" Les Paul Custom with a Marshall stack), he joined *Cobra Kai* composers Leo Birenberg and Zach Robinson onstage to perform Johnny's theme song, "Ace Degenerate."

At first, Birenberg and Robinson assumed Zabka would merely strum along and try to keep up. "They sent me the basic chords, and then I had one rehearsal with them in

York University], which also has a great film program. My freshman year roommate was a film major, and I just started writing music for his stuff. That was kind of this perfect creative meld for me. And that's how I ended up on this path.

ROBINSON I started out playing guitar, and that just leads to you being in bands. But I was also interested in film music, and I never thought that being a performer and being a composer were mutually exclusive. So I was scoring plays in my high school, and at the same time my band was playing the Roxy and the Whisky and the Troubadour. Having those kinds of parallel lines was really formative for me. So I would say to anyone reading this who really sees themselves as a performer, don't limit yourself to just that. If you feel like there's something else kind of calling you, you should explore it.

A few years back you did actually bring your music to the stage, with a concert at the Whisky a Go Go called *Enter the Dojo: The Music of Cobra Kai Live*. What was it like to play this music for an audience?

BIRENBERG Putting together the concert version of this show was such a creative revelation. We did the concert at the Whisky, which is the ultimate Sunset Strip joint, and then we went and played again at a music and film festival in Spain. We had so much fun taking all the music from the show and expanding it into concert-appropriate pieces. We didn't want to just go up onstage and do a 90-second track and then another 90-second track. We wanted it to be a freakin' rock concert!

You even got Billy Zabka up there.

ROBINSON We didn't even know he played! But yeah, he came up onstage and played his own theme [*"Ace Degenerate"*]. Which, by the way, he was only supposed to play rhythm guitar. He came to one rehearsal and that was all he did. But then during the show, and you can see it in the YouTube video, my face lights up because he starts playing the melody with me. He had practiced it the night before and surprised us. It was really special. I hope he can do it again with us.

BIRENBERG That's one thing that's really cool about this show — it's a really close-knit group of people, from the cast and creators to the writers, editors and composers. And I think it comes from a place that, I don't know, *Cobra Kai* is a bit like the little engine that could. It started out as just a YouTube show, and then it became the biggest thing ever on YouTube. It was this giant fish in a small pond. Now it's on Netflix, and it's like a giant fish in the ocean, eating everything. [*Laughs*] It's an incredible thing to be a part of. GW

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

A young Zabka on the set of *The Karate Kid*. "I walked into this room with all these black belts," he says. "The energy pushed me out of the room and into my dad's Volvo. I sat there... and cranked up some Zebra. It helped me to not get psyched out"

Hollywood and it sounded like crap," Zabka recalls. "They were like, 'Okay, that was good. We'll see you tomorrow.' "

But just like Johnny Lawrence squaring off against Daniel LaRusso at the 1984 All-Valley Karate Tournament, Zabka was intent on showing "Ace Degenerate" no mercy.

"I went home that night and pulled out my guitar, sat by the firepit in my backyard and learned all the chords, all the licks, everything," he says. The next night at the Whisky, "We got onstage and I think I surprised Zach and Leo when I started going into the licks and actually playing the song. You can see it in the video that's posted online, where Zach's kind of like looking at me, like, 'Hey, you got it!' " Zabka laughs. "But what a thrill to play the Johnny Lawrence anthem, and at the Whisky of all places. I mean, all points came together."

It was something of a full-circle guitar moment for Zabka, and not his only one. He recalls a moment in 2015 when, in a twist of fate, one of his first guitar idols, Eddie Van Halen, gave him something of an impromptu guitar lesson.

"The first concert I ever went to was Van Halen — the 1980 Invasion tour," Zabka says (and true to form, in a Season 1 episode of *Cobra Kai* Johnny Lawrence can be spotted wearing an Invasion tee). "To be 14 years old and watching Eddie come out and play 'Eruption,' it was like this music came out of the sky. He was just bigger than life."

A few years back Zabka celebrated his 50th birthday by going to see Van Halen, once again reunited with David Lee Roth, at the Hollywood Bowl. "And I bumped into a good friend of mine, Janie, who had actually married Eddie. And she said, 'Do you want to go and meet Eddie?' I'm like, 'Are you kidding? Yes, I want to go meet Eddie!' "

He continues, "So I'm with a few of my buddies, and we all get in an elevator and go downstairs to the dressing room... and there's Eddie Van Halen. And he was just the nicest guy. At one point he hands me his guitar and he says, 'You play?' I go, 'A little bit — let me show you my version of "Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love." ' So I go into it, and I'm playing it up on the fretboard. He goes, 'No, man, no.' And he literally gets behind me and starts playing the notes and showing me how it's just a simple A minor thing. And then a few minutes later he's like, 'All right, I gotta get ready.' It was so epic."

Zabka may have received some guidance from the master, but these days he's functioning as something of a six-string sensei himself. "My son is just starting to play, and he's the same age I was when I started," he says. "So I have a renewed love and interest in the guitar, and in getting the cobwebs off and the rust out in order to show him some things."

Even as Zabka's profile rises once again with *Cobra Kai* (in addition to his starring role, he's also an executive producer on the series), he still makes time for his first love. "The guitar's a companion, just like it always has been," he says. "It's just part of life for me."

He recalls a recent visit with an old friend by way of example. "I was just in L.A. visiting a buddy of mine that I lived with for eight years back in the late Nineties. We used to have these great parties at our old condo together, and everybody would come and bring instruments and we'd have these big jam circles. He just bought a house in Toluca Lake, and so we went out to dinner and then went back to his place. So we're walking through his house, and there's his piano. We had some friends with us, and he had his Taylor over in the corner. We hadn't played together in, like, 15 years, but I grabbed that guitar and we went right into 'Sweet Home Alabama.' And it went on from there for the next hour. We just jammed. It was so great. I love the guitar."

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True Value

SQUIER CONTEMPORARY STRATOCASTER SPECIAL HT AND PARANORMAL TORONADO

By Chris Gill

FORTY YEARS AGO Fender introduced the Squier brand to provide affordable versions of the company's flagship instruments like the Stratocaster and Telecaster and compete with low-priced import copies of those instruments. Since then, both beginning players looking for an inexpensive first instrument and experienced guitarists looking for great value have turned to Squier guitars, which have consistently delivered exceptional bang for the buck.

While Squier started out offering what were essentially authorized copies of original Fender production models, in more recent times the brand shifted to offering its own original models in addition to the usual Stratocaster and Telecaster guitars (which now also include the Classic Vibe series with period-correct details). Squier's Affinity, Contemporary and Paranormal series each have their own distinct approach and offer a variety of models and features that aren't available in Fender-brand counterparts. We took a closer look at the new Squier Contemporary Stratocaster Special HT and Paranormal Toronado and discovered that both offer distinctive sounds and performance that truly deserve consideration on their own merits without even considering the bonus of their budget prices.

Squier
Paranormal
Toronado

FEATURES The Squier Contemporary Stratocaster Special HT is a Strat, but not as we know it, Jim. While it may share the same sculpted asymmetrical double-cutaway body shape and has three single-coil pickups, the middle pickup is positioned much closer to the bridge pickup and all three pickups are angled. The switching is also customized to provide the following five pickup settings: bridge/middle series (humbucking), middle only, middle/neck (parallel), bridge/middle/neck, and neck only. The control configuration is simplified as well, consisting of master volume and master tone knobs instead of the Strat's standard three-knob volume/tone/tone setup. The pickups are Squier SQR Alnico single-coils.

Other notable features of the Squier Contemporary Stratocaster Special HT include a roasted maple neck with Indian laurel fingerboard, 12-inch radius, 22 medium jumbo frets, graphite nut and black-finished oversized headstock face, a sculpted neck heel with asymmetrical four-bolt neck plate and black hardware, which includes a six-saddle string-thru-body hardtail bridge with block saddles (the regular Contemporary Stratocaster Special features a modern two-point tremolo bridge).

The Squier Paranormal Toronado resurrects the underrated Fender Toronado model originally produced from 1998 until 2006. The Toronado resembles the offset body shape of a Jazzmaster but with a wider, more voluptuous profile. The Toronado also breaks with Fender convention by featuring a 24.75-inch scale length and a pair of Squier Atomic humbucking pickups. With its poplar body and bolt-on maple neck with Indian laurel fingerboard, the Toronado combines attributes of F- and G-style guitars to deliver a fresh and different tonal personality and feel.

Features of the Paranormal Tornado include 22 narrow tall frets, 9.5-inch radius, C-shape profile, three-position pickup selector toggle (bridge, both, neck settings), six-saddle string-thru-body hardtail bridge, vintage-style tuners and four knurled flat-top chrome control knobs (individual volume and tone controls for each pickup).

PERFORMANCE The only detail that distinguishes these guitars as budget instruments is the Squier name on the headstock. In terms of style, construction, playability, tone and sonic personality, these models deliver truly professional gig-worthy performance. The fretwork is outstanding, with comfortably rounded edges and smooth surfaces that allow the strings to glide when bending notes. Unlike many past Squier models, pickup and hardware upgrades aren't really necessary, and the pickups in particular deliver a good amount of both models' appeal.

The Contemporary Stratocaster Special is impressively versatile, providing a great combo of popular Strat-style tones as well as distinctive original tones you won't find elsewhere (including the bridge/middle humbucking and all pickup settings). Similarly, the Paranormal Toronado has its own unique sonic signature that's brighter than the usual dual-humbucker/set neck sound, falling into a territory that's fatter and hotter than Gretsch Filtertrons and P90-style pickups but with more treble bite and midrange throatiness than common humbucker tones.

The quality and attention to detail knocked me out. With its black hardware and roasted maple neck the Contemporary Stratocaster Special looks like a custom instrument, and the Mystic Seafoam finish of the Paranormal Toronado was similarly eye-catching. Setup was excellent out of the box, with only a few intonation and truss rod tweaks needed to make it ready for the stage or a session.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICES:
$459.99 (Contemporary Stratocaster Special HT); $449.99 (Paranormal Toronado)
MANUFACTURER:
Squier, fender.com

- The Contemporary Stratocaster Special HT features three angled single-coil pickups in a unique configuration with versatile switching capabilities.
- The Paranormal Toronado offers a pair of Squier Atomic humbucking pickups and a 24.75-inch scale length to deliver distinctive tones.
- Notable deluxe features of the Contemporary Stratocaster Special HT include a roasted maple neck and sculpted neck heel.
- The Paranormal Toronado's upscale styling touches include Mystic Seafoam or Three-Color Sunburst finish options and chrome knurled flat-top control knobs.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:** Offering classy styling and unique tones, these highly affordable new Squier models are equally perfect for beginners seeking outstanding value as well as experienced players looking to expand their sonic options without compromising quality and playability.

Gravel and Grail

ELECTRO-HARMONIX DIRT ROAD SPECIAL

By Paul Riario

SOLID STATE AMPS tend to fall into two categories: your meat-and-potatoes "clean and dirty with reverb" bundles — and "everything but the kitchen sink" ones with amp and effects modeling. I have no problem using either type as of late because, frankly, solid state amplification has come a long way from some of the sterile- and anemic-sounding tubeless amps of yore. Case in point: Electro-Harmonix's brand-new Dirt Road Special isn't an exact reissue of the late-Seventies "Mike Matthews Dirt Road Special" — a rare 25-watt solid state combo with Electro-Harmonix's Small Stone phaser circuit built in — but rather, a capable 1x12 combo that builds upon the original's design by bumping the power up to 40 watts and replacing the phaser with four built-in reverbs pulled from EHX's Holy Grail Max pedal instead, making it a far more practical and gig-worthy amp. But more importantly, its updated circuitry provides a more authentic tube-like response and feel that may almost make you forget it's a solid state amp.

FEATURES The boxy Dirt Road Special may look somewhat small, but don't be fooled; this combo gets plenty loud, thanks to its open-back design and custom-voiced Electro-Harmonix 12-inch speaker that's rated at 75 watts. It's also pleasantly portable and feels much lighter than its 30 lbs readout. Its top-panel controls include Volume, Tone (bass/treble frequency response), Bite (gain and treble frequency response), Reverb (reverb volume) along with a rotary reverb-type selector (Spring, Hall, Plate and Reverse) and Time (adjusts the reverb's decay time). The amp also includes an on/off footswitch for the reverb.

PERFORMANCE I really thought the Dirt Road Special would mostly be a "clean machine" — and it certainly does that — despite the amp's figurative name that suggests otherwise. To get spotlessly clean largely depends on where you set the Volume knob, and then, how you balance the interactive dance between the Tone and Bite controls. For this, Volume can be taken up to 3 while leaving the Tone knob at high noon and setting the Bite control slightly before that for fullness and clarity. Here, the DRS is great for hearing the sparkle of your single-coil pickups and the roundness of humbucker-equipped guitars. It's also where your time-based and modulated effects receive proper representation in use as a solid pedal platform. But to find that "Dirt Road," those same controls need to become a matter of addition and subtraction. As you increase Bite along with Volume, more gravelly grind emerges with a sharpened high-end attack, which means you'll need to dial back Tone to supplant the gain and higher treble frequency response of Bite in order to bring forth more plump low-end. At peak volumes, I'm not sure I'd call the sound overdriven, but depending on how hard you dig in, it reminds me of the stinging, pointed drive that screamed from Pete Townshend's super-loud HiWatt stacks, and easing up on your guitar's volume control will curb that pummeling tone. Simply put, it's a gritty "loud-clean" with a noticeable degree of warmth, and finding that sweet spot mix between those controls makes the Dirt Road Special convincingly react much like a tube amp.

If you love 'verb, you'll appreciate the built-in selection of onboard reverbs in the DRS. What's really useful is having the Time knob for setting generous or narrower decay times for each of its voluminous reverb types. Many players will find the Spring and Hall reverbs to be handy in most live situations for their organic shimmer. Plate is the most immense of the four, and maxing out the decay time stirs up a splashy tidal wave of reverb wash that seems to endlessly linger. Reverse is more of a novelty, but its delayed backward response can make for some fun and interesting spatial textures if you decide to commit it to tape.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $406.90
MANUFACTURER: Electro-Harmonix, ehx.com

- The Dirt Road Special's interactive Volume, Tone and Bite controls can be dialed in for pristine cleans or raw, gritty drive.
- The amp features four built-in reverbs (Spring, Plate, Hall and Reverse) plucked from EHX's Holy Grail Max pedal.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE** As a solid state powerhouse with four built-in reverbs, the blistering EHX Dirt Road Special delivers sparkling cleans or stinging drive with tube-like gusto.

GUITAR WORLD PLATINUM AWARD EXCELLENCE

Synth City

BOSS SY-200 SYNTHESIZER

By Paul Riario

ONE OF THE biggest drawbacks that kept many guitarists from using guitar synthesizers was the commitment required. In the past, guitar synthesizer systems required dedicated controllers or special pickup systems, and the sound modules were usually housed in bulky floor controllers or rack mount units. This was fine for players who were fully dedicated to making a guitar synth their main instrument, but for guitarists who just wanted a couple cool synth sounds for occasional leads or some lush pads for a few rhythm parts it was a bit much.

The Boss SY-200 Synthesizer pedal provides a compact, easy-to-use alternative that's perfect for everyone from guitarists who to explore a handful of synth sounds and textures to full-blown guitar synth enthusiasts. Housed in a unit that's only slightly larger than a standard Boss compact pedal and offering true plug-and-play performance (no special pickups or controllers are needed), the SY-200 is the easiest way for guitarists to explore the vast universe of synthesizer sounds.

FEATURES The SY-200 offers 171 sounds arranged in a dozen groups—Lead, Pad, String, Bell, Organ, Bass, Dual, Sweep, Noise, SFX, SEQ and Arpeggio. Individual sounds are accessed via a rotary switch and the Variation knob, and they are easily modified via three multi-function parameter knobs. Users can save customized sounds to 128 internal memory locations. The top panel also includes individual level controls for the direct guitar signal and effect (synth), a Menu button for accessing on/off, control and expression pedal functions and send/return, system, MIDI, MIDI PC map and factory reset functions, an Exit button for quickly returning to performance mode and a rotary Memory knob for scrolling through presets. All performance and editing settings are easy to see thanks to a large, brightly lit LCD display. A pair of footswitches provide on/of and assignable memory/control 1 and hold functions. Input, output, send, return and controller ¼-inch jacks are mounted on the rear panel, and 1/8-inch MIDI In and Out and a mini USB jack are located on the left side. The pedal is powered by three AA batteries or an optional Boss PSA-S adapter.

PERFORMANCE The Boss SY-200 provides guitarists with the easiest gateway to exploring synth sounds ever. Just plug the unit between your guitar and amp like an ordinary effects pedal and you're instantly ready to go—no level or sensitivity tweaking or other adjustments are required. The synth sounds track flawlessly without latency, whether playing single-note lines or chords (thanks to the SY-200's polyphonic capabilities), but note that it's best to play notes as cleanly as possible and avoid techniques like string scrapes and artificial harmonics that may not track well. Also, as typical for any guitar synth, players may need to adjust their playing technique for certain sounds, such as patches with slow attack envelopes.

The 171 sounds cover an excellent variety of synth tones and textures particularly well suited for electric guitarists. While the SY-200 may not be quite as versatile as a dedicated synthesizer and lacks some of the most fashionable EDM sounds, it still works particularly well for adding new dimensions to solos, rhythm parts and chord pads in a full band context. I particularly loved blending several of the Lead sounds with the regular guitar signal and a distortion pedal patched to the send/return jacks to play massive-sounding solos. Most of the patches sound great when amplified through a regular guitar amp dialed to a clean setting or even mild overdrive, but the SY-200 sounds best when connected to a full-range sound system. An ABY pedal is worth consideration for players who want to get the best of both worlds.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $389.99
MANUFACTURER:
Boss, boss.info

- A total of 171 different sounds are arranged in 12 groups: Lead, Pad, String, Bell, Organ, Bass, Dual, Sweep, Noise, SFX, SEQ and Arpeggio.
- The unit stores 128 internal presets, making it easy for users to program their own sounds and recall them instantly.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:**
The Boss SY-200 Synthesizer offers guitarists the easiest and most affordable gateway to the wonderful world of guitar synthesis by providing true plug-and-play performance in a compact pedal unit that delivers 171 awesome synth sounds.

Buzz Bin

LD Systems Maui 5 Go 100

GUITAR WORLD GOLD AWARD PERFORMANCE

IN THE SAME funny way guitarists have an urge to check out another player's live rig at a show, I've been doing the same — albeit for portable PAs. With soundmen becoming increasingly scarce, many performers have had to rely on themselves to provide sound for their shows. So, naturally, I've been paying a great deal of attention to what other players are using in this space. Granted, I've been focused on smaller line array PA systems, mostly because they're easy to set up, portable and generally get the job done with decent encompassing sound. Admittedly, compared to other brands, I wasn't familiar with LD Systems' vast amount of pro audio products for musicians and touring professionals, so when I was given the chance to review their battery-powered Maui 5 Go 100 all-in-one column PA system that can furnish "loud and clear" sound for up to 100 people, I couldn't resist.

For singer-songwriting duos, solo acoustic/electric performers and buskers, the Maui 5 Go 100 will more than fit the bill for most live sound requirements and environments. The system is adequately powerful having 200-watt RMS (800 watts peak) of class D amplification and arrives in four compact and lightweight pieces — an integrated electronics subwoofer base (with 8-inch subwoofer), column section with an integrated rechargeable lithium-ion battery (charger is built-in to subwoofer), column spacer (you can omit if you need to go smaller) and column section with four 3-inch speakers. Its slim vertical line array configuration is unobtrusive and I really dug its eye-catching modern-barrel design — plus, the whole system sets up in a matter of seconds. Key features include an integrated 4-channel mixer, Bluetooth stereo audio streaming and a lithium-ion battery that can provide up to 12 hours of continuous operation depending on how loud you drive the volume. If you spring for the spare battery column section (Maui 5 Go BC), you can prolong your performance, thanks to LD's Quick-Swap Technology.

From the swift setup to plug-in and playing, I'm pretty knocked out by the Maui 5 Go 100 for its streamlined ease of use, clear and neutral sound and long battery life. While there isn't any EQ tailoring for the Mic, Hi Z and Line Input channels, you can control the overall low end and treble frequencies by using the master Sub Level and Hi-Boost (high shelf filter) controls, respectively. The baked-in LECC DSP combines a multi-band limiter, equalizer, compressor and crossover to do an admirable job of ensuring the clearest sound fidelity at any volume level. I found the system's no-nonsense approach allowed me to get an excellent live sound with impressive clarity in the small to medium venues where I play. My only nitpick is the omission of reverb for the unit, which could be a deal-breaker for some. However, I'd argue most of my performing peers (myself included) already use and bring their own vocal processors and mixers. But if you need that and more, LD offers the FX300 2-channel vocal effects pedal as an option to remedy that.

— *Paul Riario*

STREET PRICE: $899.99; Maui 5 Go BC, $199.99; FX300, $199.99
MANUFACTURER: LD Systems, ld-systems.com

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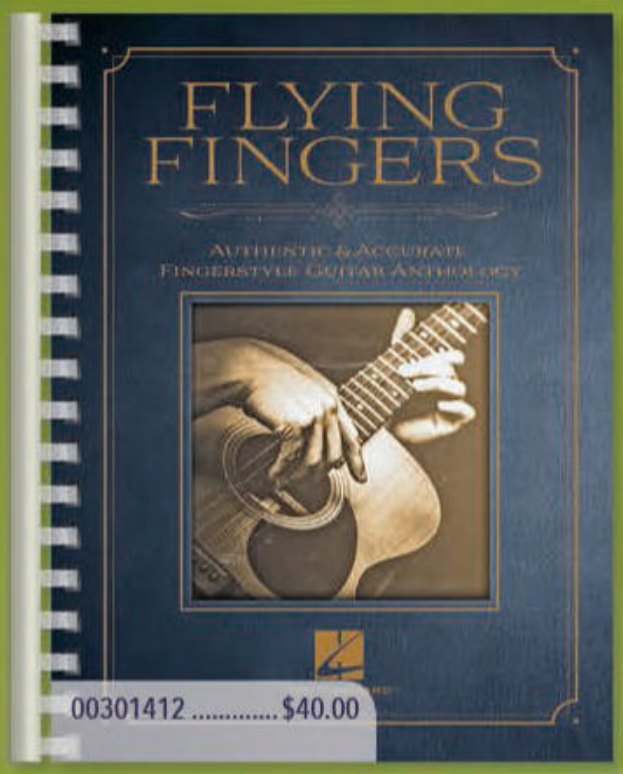

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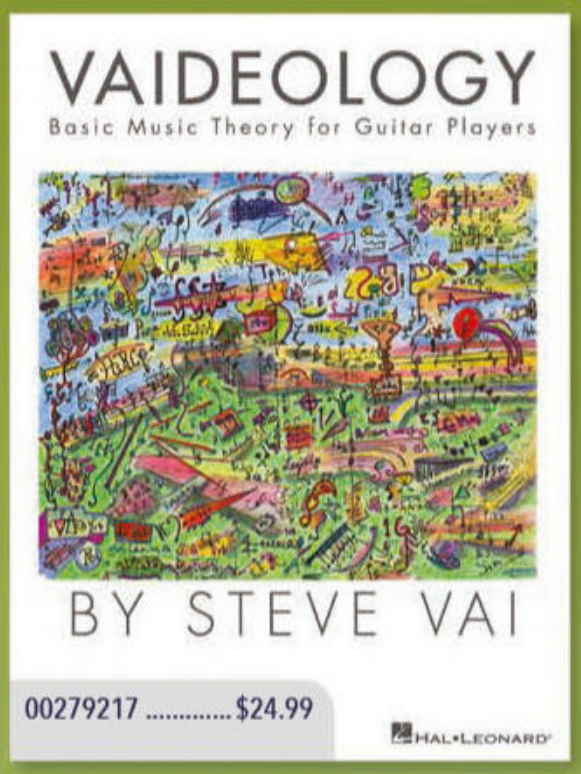

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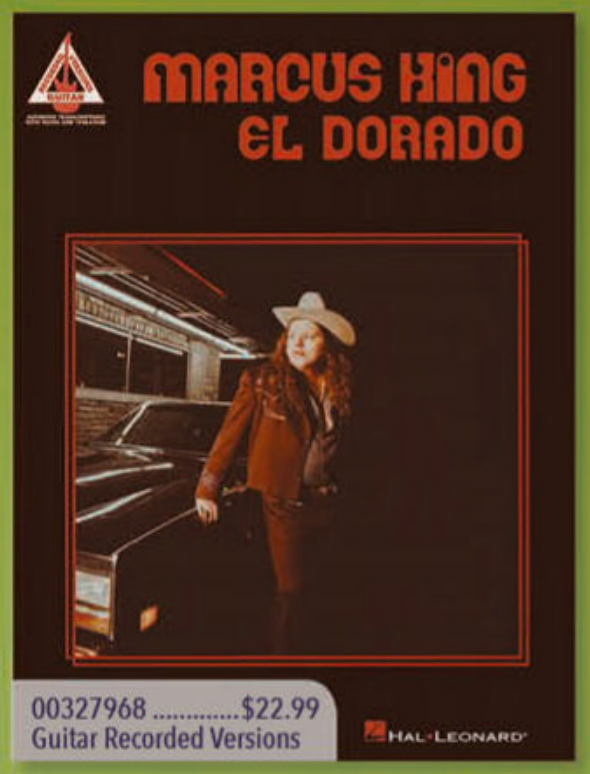

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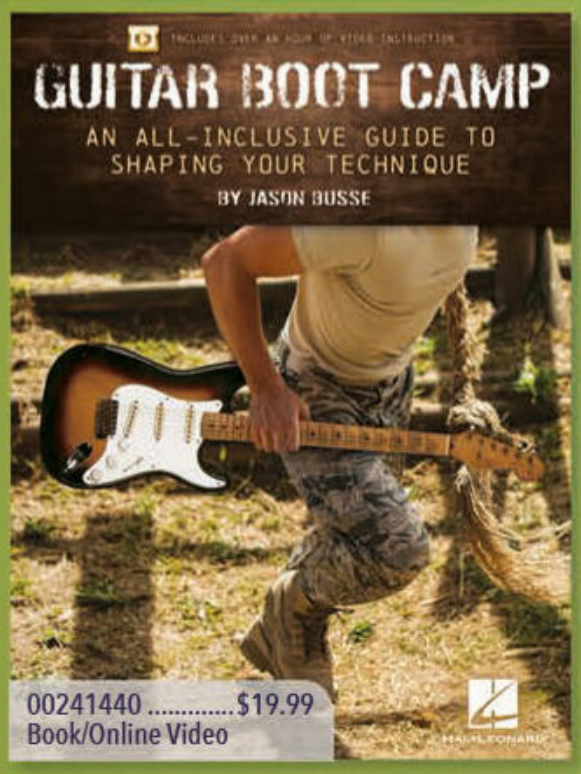

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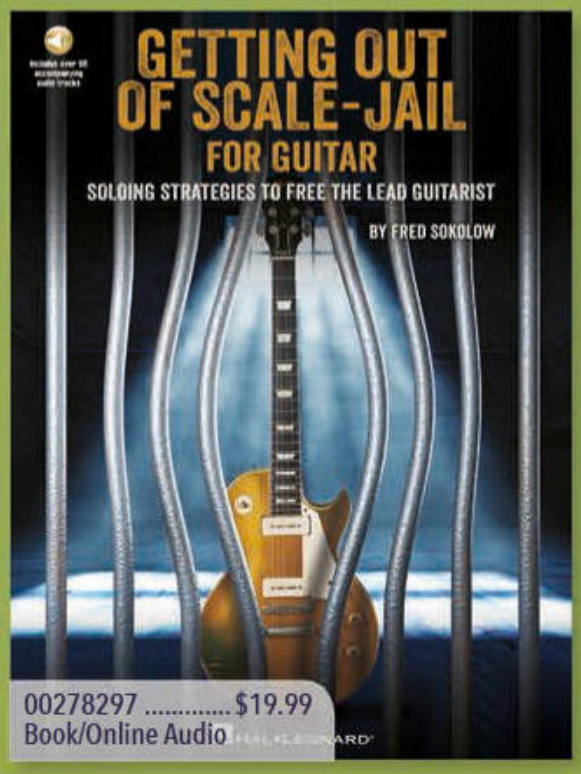

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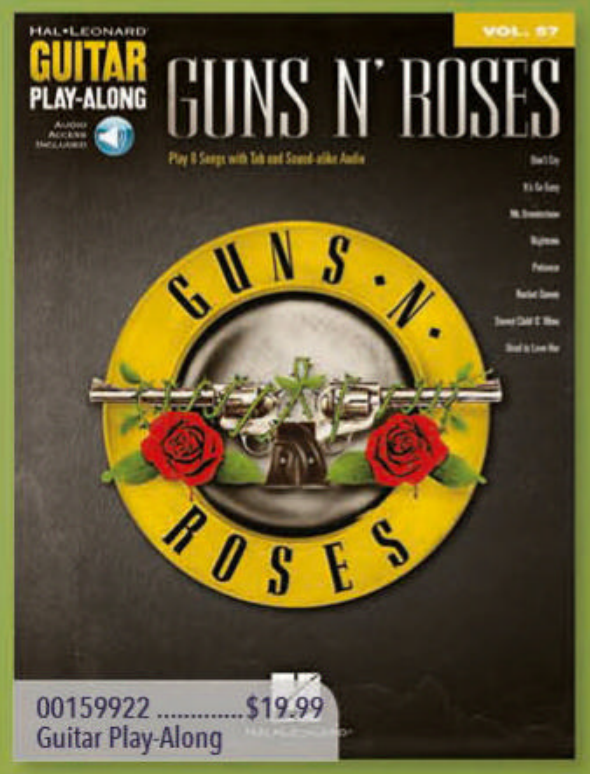

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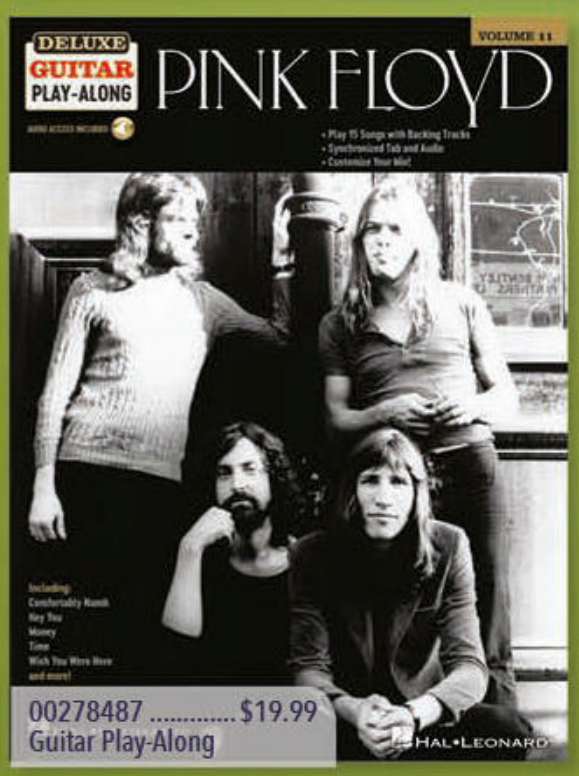

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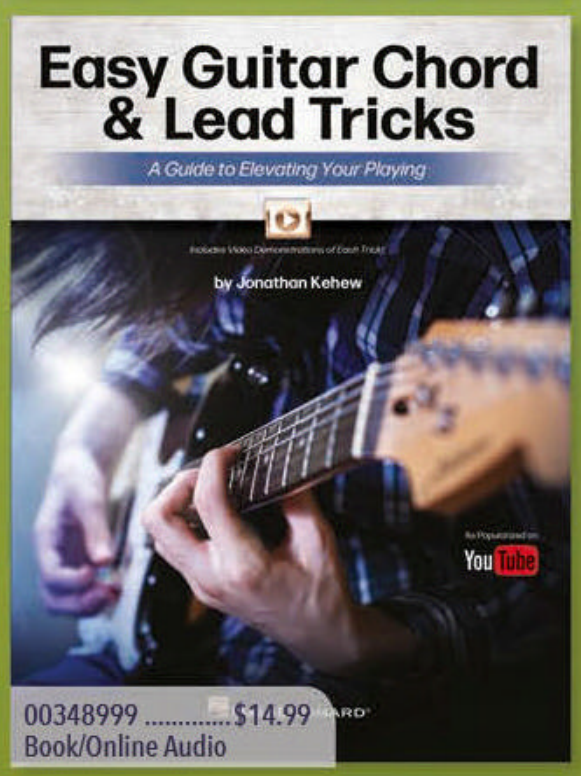

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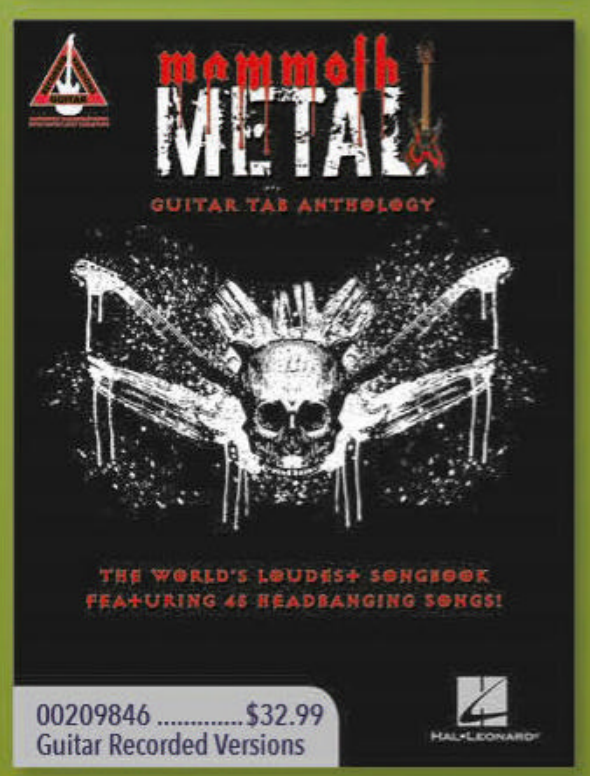

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IN DEEP

by Andy Aledort

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DREAM WEAVER

Soloing over the Allman Brothers' "Dreams," part 3

IN THE PREVIOUS two columns, I presented improvised solo phrases played over a two-chord vamp in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, inspired by the classic Allman Brothers Band song "Dreams." On the original track, guitarist Duane Allman improvised over alternating C/D and D chords, with each chord lasting the length of a single bar. As I detailed in the prior two columns, Duane navigated these changes by drawing notes from three different scales: D Mixolydian (D, E, F♯, G, A, B, C), D major pentatonic (D, E, F♯, A, B) and D major hexatonic (D, E, F♯, G, A, B).

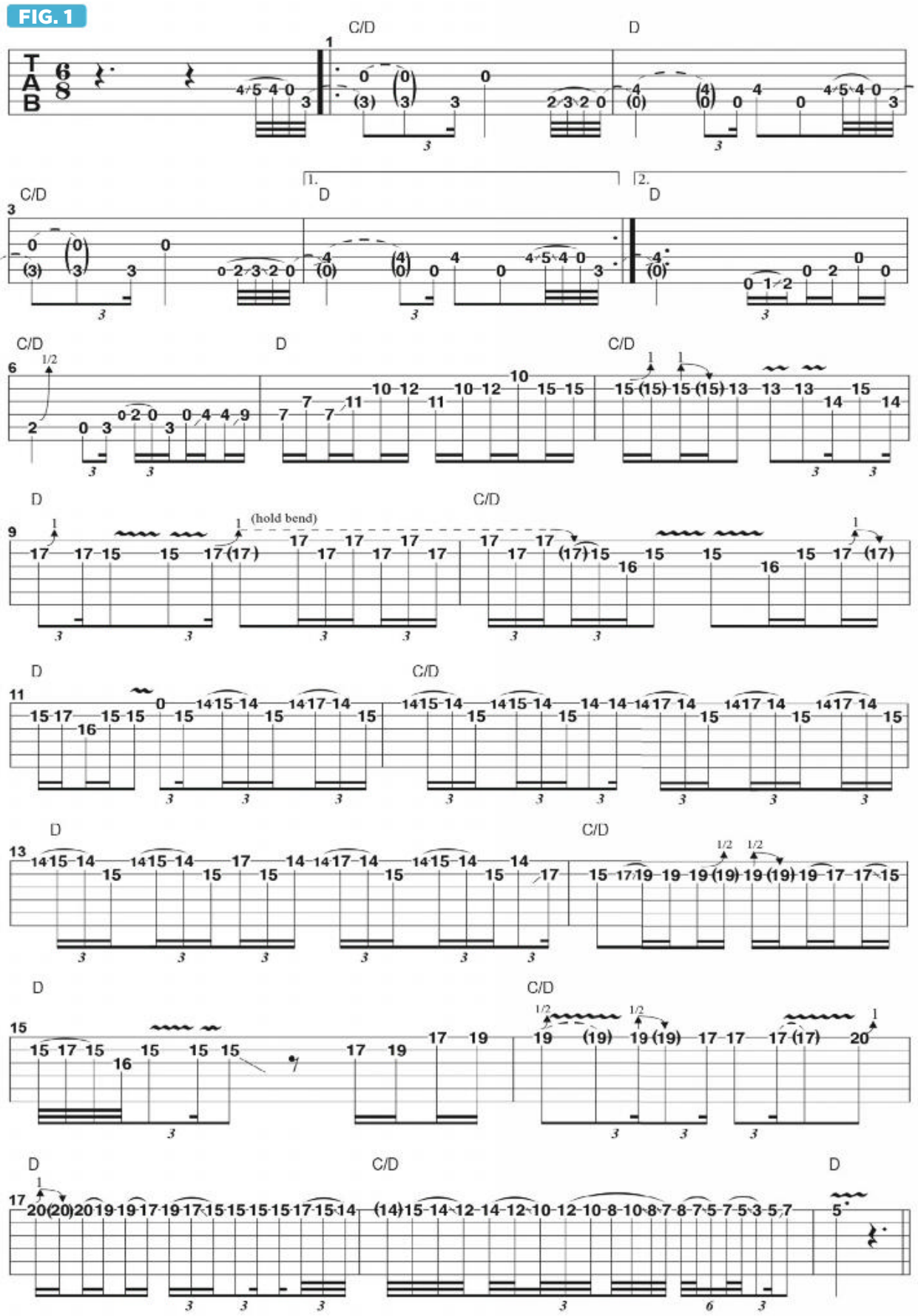
Duane had the ability to craft his brilliant solos with an ear toward the shifting harmonic environment laid beneath. In "Dreams," he improvised melodies with the appropriate chord tones in mind while connecting each subsequent phrase to the previous one. Over C/D, he intentionally emphasized the C major triad tones C, E and G; when playing over D, he would emphasize the D major triad tones D, F♯ and A, assigning the chord tones as pivot points throughout the improvisation.

FIGURE 1 offers another improvised solo of mine, played over the same groove and vamp. Here, I introduce a melodic theme designed to specifically describe each of the two chords. Just prior to the initial C/D chord, I perform a quick slide and pull-off to the open D string, followed by a low C note and the open G string played together, which locks in with the C/D. This bar then ends with a rhythmically similar slide and pull-off to the open A string, which then rings while I play a fretted F♯ note above it, making clear reference to the underlying D chord. To further strengthen this phrase as a theme, I proceed to play it four times.

Bar 5 represents the second ending of the repeated phrase, and I use this theme to set up the "answer" to the theme, initiated in the second half of the bar with the use of D major pentatonic into D Mixolydian at the start of bar 6. Over the D chord in bar 7, I pull the melody back to simpler territory with a return to D major pentatonic, only to bring the C note back into the picture in bar 8 over the C/D chord.

Generally speaking, this "shifting harmonic view" is how I approach soloing over the two chords throughout the remainder of the solo. Of equal importance is the variety in the polyrhythms used. If we think of each bar of $\frac{6}{8}$ as being two bars of $\frac{3}{4}$ and count "*one* - two - three, *two* - two - three," one could fill the space in an interesting variety ways, the simplest being straight eighths, to straight 16ths (two notes per eighth note) to 16-note triplets or straight 32nd notes on each eighth note, or any combination thereof.

FIG. 1



Guitar World **Associate Editor Andy Aledort is recognized worldwide for his vast contributions to guitar instruction, via his many best-selling instructional DVDs, transcription books and online lessons.**

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/march2022

LES TALK

The 10 sounds of a Les Paul

HELLO, AND WELCOME to my new column for *Guitar World*! Over the course of these lessons, I will discuss and demonstrate many of the approaches I use for soloing, rhythm guitar, songwriting and all guitar-centric things. I hope you dig it!

I'd first like to talk about the 10 or so different sounds that one can get out of a Gibson or Epiphone Les Paul, simply by manipulating its electronic controls. A standard-issue Les Paul sports two humbucking pickups, each with its own volume and tone controls. The three-way toggle switch offers neck pickup only, bridge pickup only, or both pickups together, which allows the player to blend the sounds of the two pickups in myriad ways, by simply adjusting the volume and/or tone of each.

Let's begin on the neck, also known as the "front," or "rhythm," pickup, with the tone set to 10 and the volume rolled back in order to attain a nice, clean sound. With the volume on 2 or 3, the tone is very clear and dynamic, which inspired the improvised licks I demonstrate in **FIGURE 1**. The phrases that I play in this example are based on a combination of A major pentatonic (A, B, C♯, E, F♯), A minor pentatonic (A, C, D, E, G) and A Mixolydian (A, B, C♯, D, E, F♯, G).

If you're looking for a more overdriven front-pickup "super Strat" kind of thing, keep the tone on 10 and turn the volume all the way up. **FIGURE 2** illustrates some phrases played with the guitar set this way.

Yet another great, inspiring LP tone can be achieved by rolling the tone knob all the way down to 0 while keeping the volume on 10. This yields that Cream-era Eric Clapton lead sound, which the legendary guitarist once referred to as the "woman tone." **FIGURE 3** offers some licks inspired by this tone. Here, I've switched to E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D), à la Eric's playing on "I'm So Glad" and "Spoonful." Try turning the tone up gradually from 0 to 10 while listening to the subtle differences in tone as more treble is added.

Now let's switch over to the bridge, AKA "back," or "lead," pickup. With the tone on 10 and the volume low, we get a bright, clean sound, which is great for country licks, like those in **FIGURE 4**. You can then simply crank up the volume control to attain that classic Les Paul blues-rock crunch tone, which works well for many styles and inspired the licks offered in **FIGURE 5**.

Oftentimes when I solo using my bridge pickup, I'll start with the tone pot down to about 5, because this will yield a nice, rounder sound than when the control is all the way up to 10. **FIGURE 6** offers an example of what I might play when using this type of smoother tone.

The next step is to experiment with the wide variety of sounds available using both pickups at once, with the four knobs set to all possible combinations. Explore, and you'll find a great range of inspiring tones!

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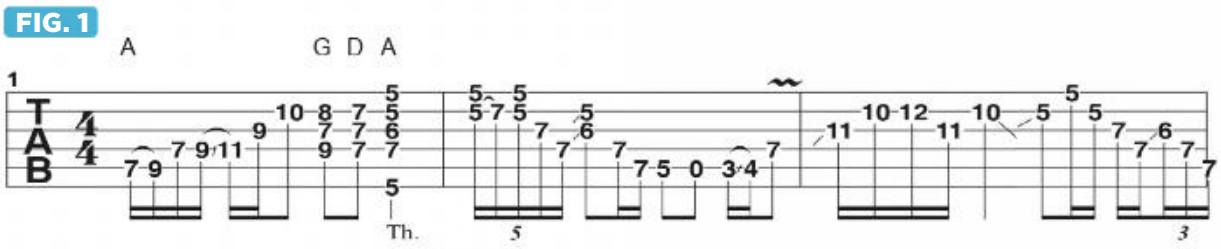
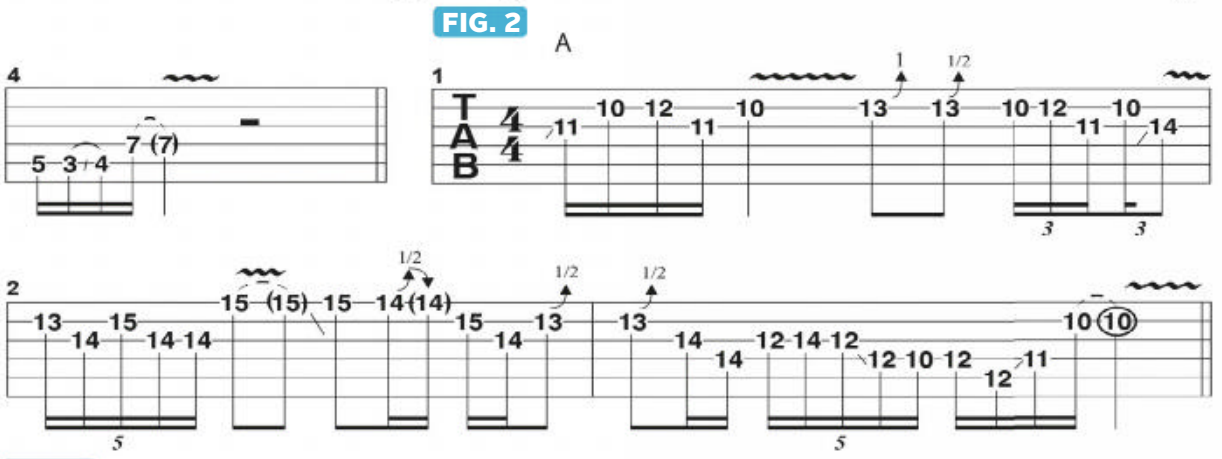


FIG. 2



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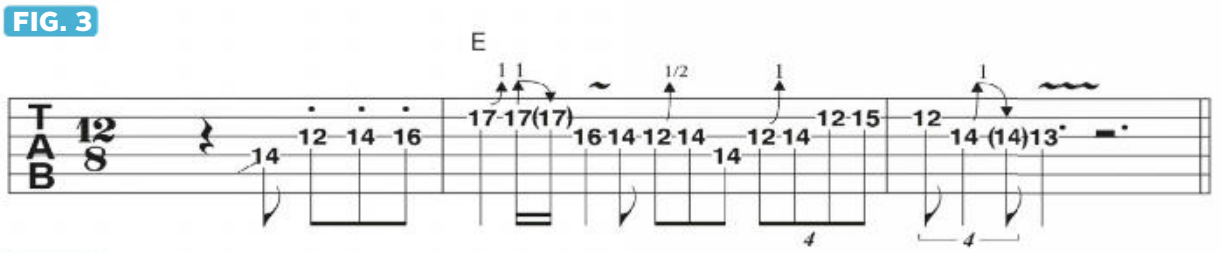

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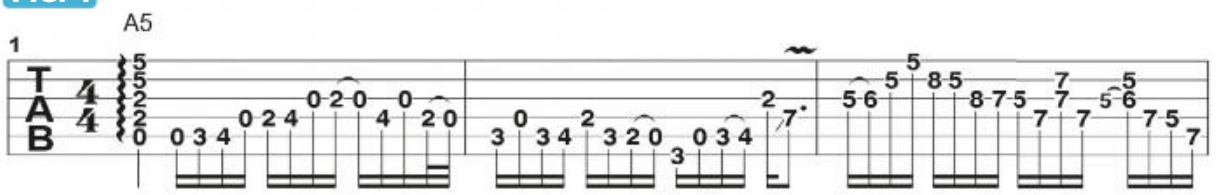

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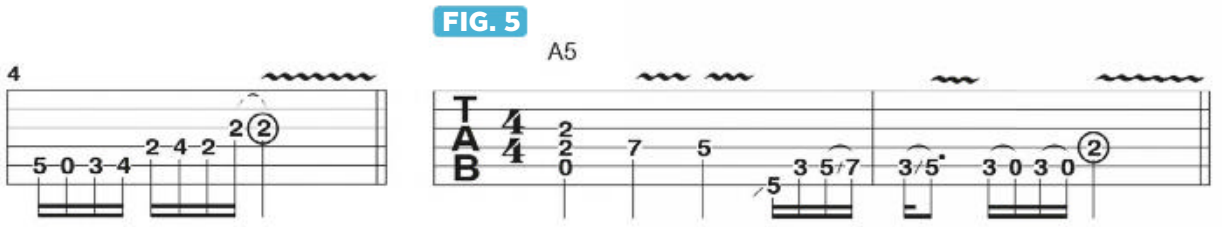
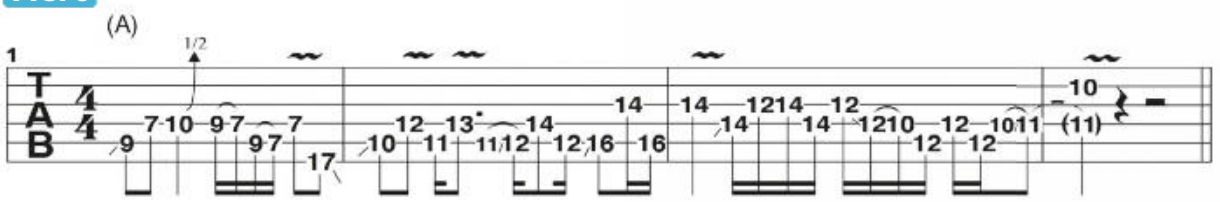


FIG. 6



Joe Bonamassa is one of the world's most popular and successful blues-rock guitarists — not to mention a top producer and *de facto* ambassador of the blues (and of the guitar in general). His latest album, *Time Clocks*, is out now, as is Eric Gales' *Crown*, which Bonamassa co-produced.

JOBY SESSIONS

MELODIC MUSE

by Andy Timmons

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/march2022

THE DOWN LOW

Exploring the low-string melodies in "Take Me with You"

THIS MONTH, I'D like to break down a song of mine called "Take Me with You," which is the last track on my new album, *Electric Truth*. To my ears, there is a distinct "Pink Floyd" vibe to the tune.

My reason for utilizing this song as a vehicle for instruction is that its primary melodic themes are played on the lower, or "bass," strings, which in and of itself is unusual for instrumental guitar music. In most cases, the higher, unwound "treble" strings are usually utilized for melodies, as the bends, finger slides and vibratos typically employed to emulate the emotive quality of the human voice feel quite natural on these strings, and they also cover the "standard" range of the human voice.

One of the cool things about the melody of "Take Me with You" is that it is played almost entirely on the wound A and D strings, which results in a sound and articulation that is distinctly different from that of the unwound higher strings. So let's celebrate how cool the lower strings sound when placed in this type of melodic context! Another element in play here is the application of a "vertical" fretboard approach, by remaining on the A and D string throughout, as opposed to sticking with a positional approach of staying in one area and moving across the strings.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the tune's initial eight-bar melody. This section is built from a repeating four-bar chord progression that goes Bm - Gmaj7 - Em - Bm. This very simple melody begins on the A string, utilizing only the triadic chord tones of Bm — B, D, F♯ — followed by a B note one octave higher at the start of bar 2 over the Gmaj7 chord. The B note, which is the root note when played over Bm, now becomes the major 3rd when played over Gmaj7, which is spelled G, B, D, F♯. Bars 2-4 move to B minor pentatonic territory (B, D, E, F♯, A) with reference to the B Aeolian mode (B, C♯, D, E, F♯, G, A), via the appearance of a G note in bar 3 and a C♯ in bar 4.

As you listen and play through this example, you'll find that the first four bars present a melodic "intention" and the next four bars serve as a "response" to it, via a new and different melodic form. And, as always, be aware of the melodic target notes as each new chord arrives.

FIG. 1

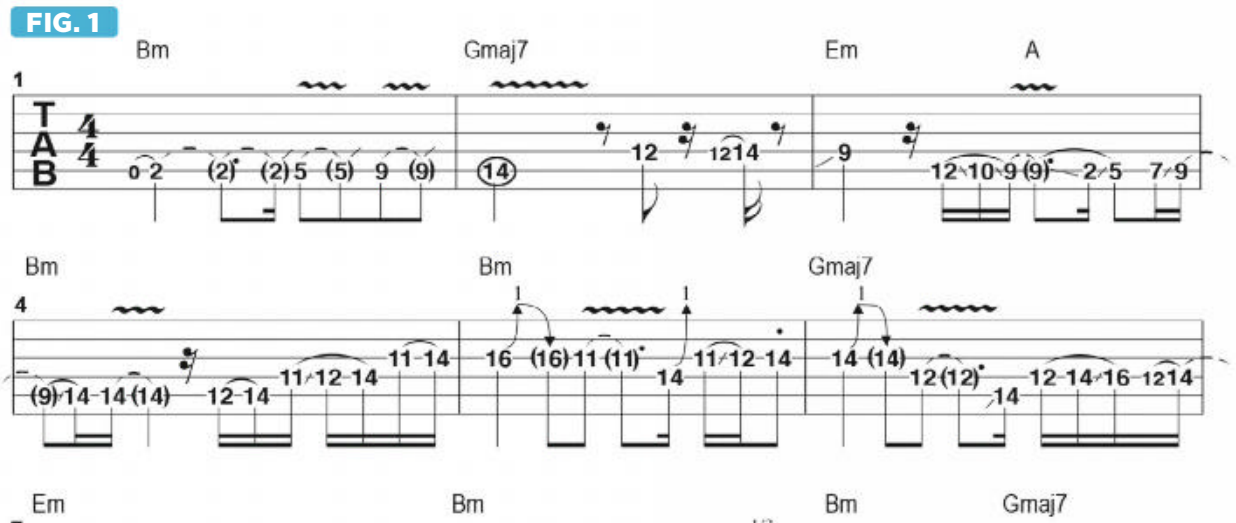


FIG. 2

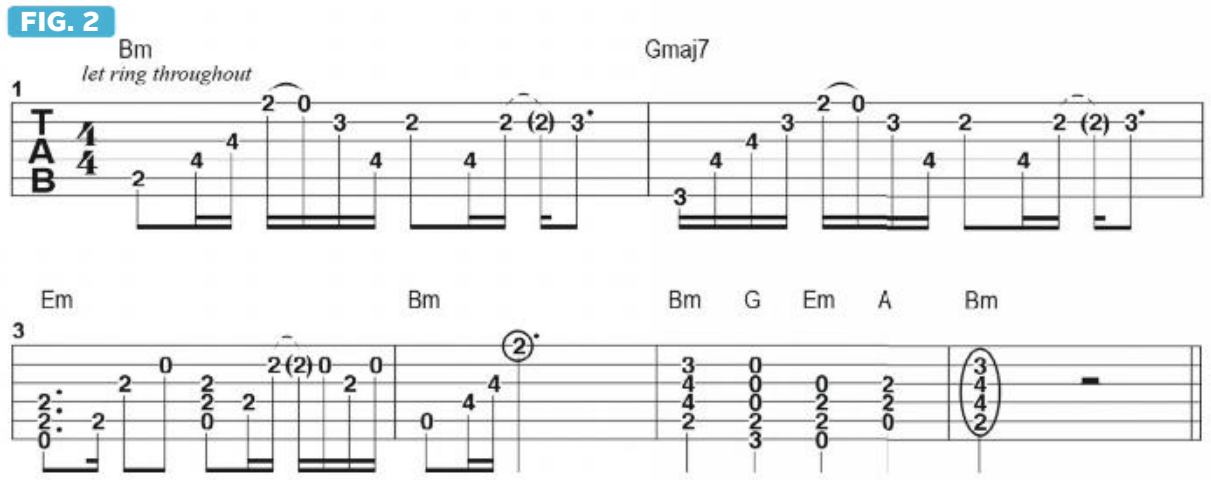


FIG. 3 B Aeolian mode

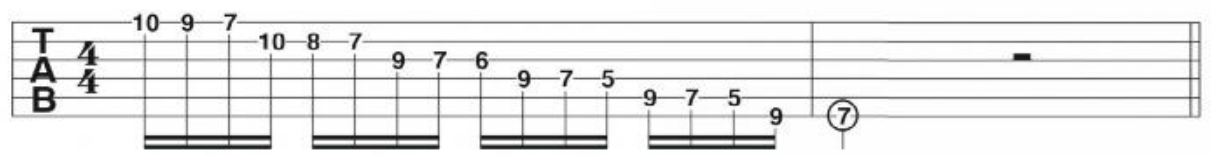


FIG. 4 B Aeolian mode

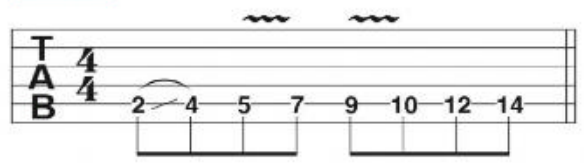
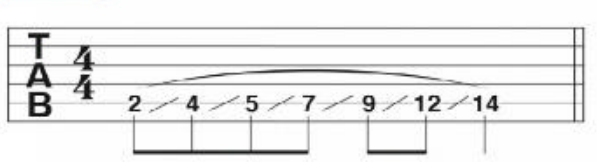


FIG. B minor hexatonic scale



Bars 1-4 of **FIGURE 2** illustrate the arpeggiated manner in which the chord progression is played. Notice the inherent melody that weaves its way through the chords as they change.

The mode that best describes the implied harmony here is B Aeolian, illustrated in **FIGURE 3**. When we stick to the lower strings, as we have been doing here, we achieve a wonderful, throaty, cello-like sound, which is something that's used less often in instrumental guitar music. And keep in mind that, while it can be very useful to play the complete B Aeolian mode on one string, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 4**, purposely leaving out the flatted 6th (♭6), G, gives you the more open-sounding B minor hexatonic scale (B, C♯, D, E, F♯, A) which is an equally great tool for melodic invention.

Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, as well as Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Visit andytimmons.com and guitarxperience.net to check out his recordings and many instructional releases

SIMONE CECHETTI

ALL EARS
by Jake Bowen of Periphery

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/march2022

WHERE EAGLES DARE

16th note displacement, and how to play "Blood Eagle"

FOR THE PERIPHERY track "Blood Eagle," which my bandmates and I recorded for *Periphery IV: Hail Stan*, we employed seven-string guitars tuned to drop-A, one half step down (low to high) A♭, E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭. For this column, I'd like to focus on the rhythmic figures I play behind Misha Mansoor's guitar solo in this song.

As I mentioned last month, I like to multi-track many of my guitar parts using different tones or signal processing chains, as this can result in a fuller, broader sound. In this instance, I tracked the rhythm part with a humbucker tone and also with a single-coil tone. The former provides low-end thickness, and the latter adds more attack and bite.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the first three bars of the rhythm part I play here. Throughout the riff, I repeatedly skip back and forth between the 7th and 5th strings, which function as the two open "A" strings (both tuned down one half step, to A♭). The phrase is built from steady 16th notes, with hammer-ons from the open strings punctuating the picked open notes. In this first example, I always hammer from the open 7th string to the 1st fret and then hammer-on from the open 5th string to the 4th fret.

An interesting twist is provided by the shift in the rhythmic syncopation of the figure. After playing the initial phrase twice, I pick the open 7th string repeatedly before the hammer-ons are reinstated, now with the hammer-ons falling on different 16th notes across the next two beats. The pattern then shifts again on beat 2 of bar 2, with the hammer-on executed one 16th note earlier within the beat. After this motif is played twice, the hammer-on is shifted yet another 16th note earlier across the next two beats, and then shifted one more 16th note earlier on beat 1 of bar 3 before returning to the initial "shape" in bar 4.

FIGURE 2 shows the rhythm part I play during bars 1-14 of the guitar solo. Bars 1-3 are the same as what is shown in **FIGURE 1**, but bar 4 introduces a variation, as the 7th-string hammer-on moves from the 1st fret to the 4th, and the 5th string hammer-on moves from the 4th fret to the 3rd.

7-string guitar, tuned to drop-A, down one half step (low to high: A♭, E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭).
All music sounds in the key of A♭, one half step lower than written.

FIG. 1

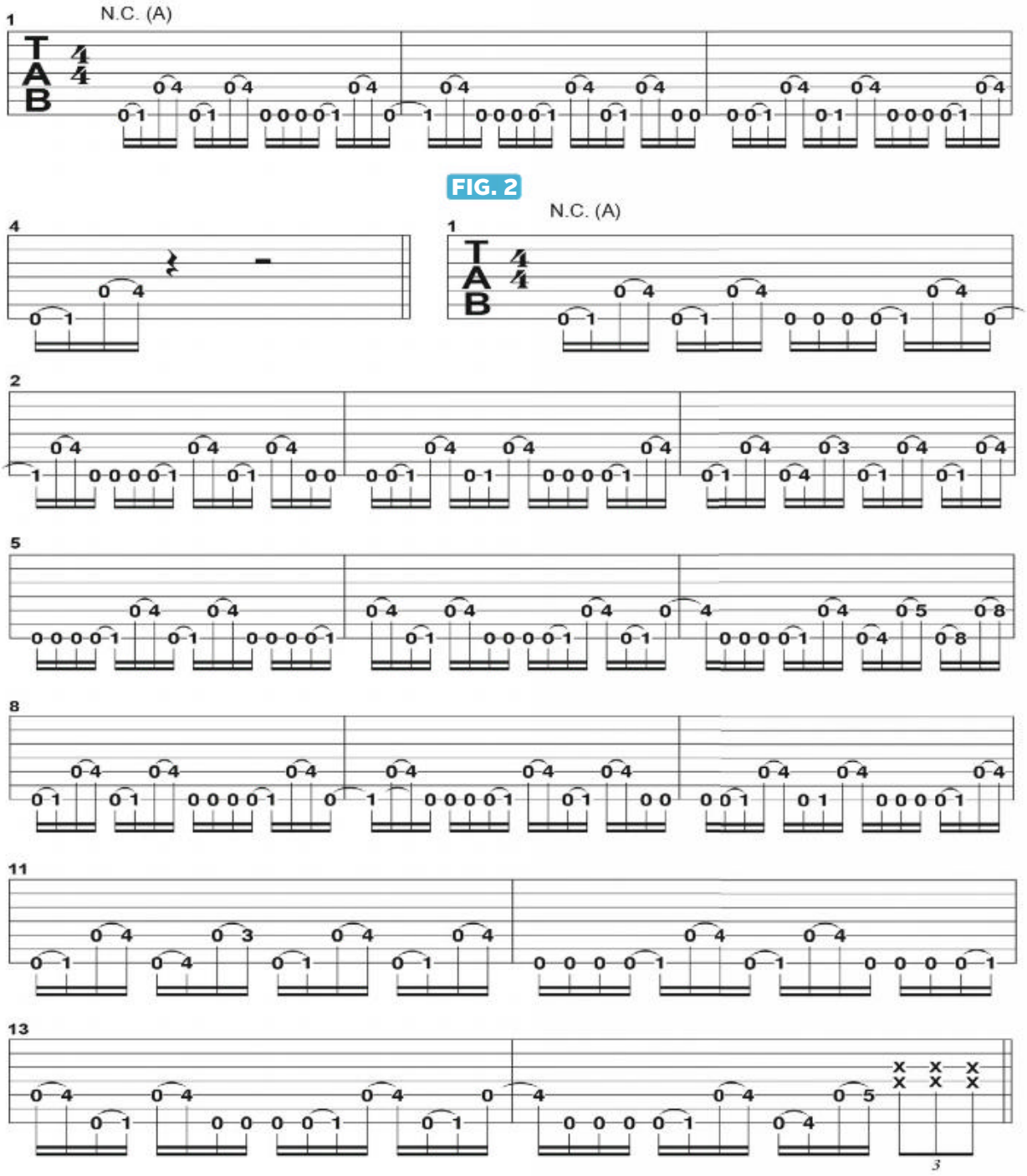


FIG. 2

Bars 5 and 6 revert to the original riff, and bar 7 brings a new variation into the mix, with 7th-string hammer-ons to the 4th and 8th frets and 5th-string hammer-ons to the 5th and 8th frets, Notice how doing this creates some interesting wide intervals and an angular melodic contour. The first six bars are then repeated, in bars 8-13, after which bar 14 ends with percussive muted-string, or "dead-string," accents, sounded by strumming across the strings while the fret-hand finger rest lightly across them without fretting any specific notes.

Hey, this is my last All Ears column for now, as I'm going to be focusing my full attention on doing what I love most — playing guitar, creating music and performing live. Thanks for checking out these columns. I hope they've been helpful and inspiring to you and will spark your own creative musical endeavors. See you out on the road, hopefully soon!

Jake Bowen is a key member of the guitar triumvirate in the critically acclaimed prog metal band Periphery, whose next studio album will be released in early 2022. His new solo album, *The Daily Sun*, is out now.

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Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS **By Jimmy Brown**

"DEAD INSIDE"
Nita Strauss

THIS NEW TRACK from Nita Strauss' upcoming second solo album features the rising-star metal guitar goddess collaborating with Disturbed vocalist David Draiman in the creation of a well-written song that strikes the perfect balance between flashy, virtuosic hard-rock riffing and compositional depth, catchiness and appeal.

Nita kindly informed us that she had employed a couple of different guitar tunings for the recorded arrangement of the song, using drop-D down a whole step, or what some refer to as "drop-C" tuning (low to high: C, G, C, F, A, D) for some parts and, for others, such as the main riff in bars 5-8, regular drop-D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, G, B, E). For our transcribed arrangement, however, we ended up following Nita's own recent decision, for live performance of the song, to arrange all the guitar parts for standard tuning down a whole step, what's also known as "D standard" tuning (low to high: D, G, C, F, A, D), as we likewise felt that this facilitates a more practical approach to playing the song live. For example, the previously mentioned riff in bars 5-8 has you playing the fretted notes two frets higher than where they were originally tracked (in regular drop-D tuning) while still being able to utilize your open 6th string to get those low open D notes, which works out well. Performing this part in "drop-C" tuning would make it, as Nita put it, "doable, but a pain in the ass."

Nita most likely recorded the fast single-note pedal-tone riff at section D (Gtr. 1 part) in drop-D tuning, which would allow her to conveniently consolidate all the notes in bars 13-15 onto one string, the 4th, and "bounce" the fretted notes off the open string, which is a classic hard rock/metal move to do with this kind of pedal-tone riff, and similar to the other one Nita crafted for the song's chorus using her B string (see section E, Gtr. 1 part). In our arrangement, we have the low pedal-tone notes in bars 13-15 tabbed as "E," at the 7th fret on the A string, and the higher notes played on the G string. Granted, this requires some deft string skipping, which makes the part a little more technically challenging to play than picking all the notes on a single string, but this is how Nita herself plays the song live.

"SOUL TO SQUEEZE"
Red Hot Chili Peppers

RECORDED DURING THE sessions for the classic *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* album, this understated and low-key but highly musical and enduringly appealing song features some of the Red Hot Chili Peppers' most tasteful writing and ensemble arranging. You'll notice that John Frusciante's guitar parts are for the most part rather sparse, especially during the song's verses, where Anthony Kiedis' vocal melody and Flea's superbly crafted bass line create a harmonious "two-voice" counterpoint that effectively outlines an implied chord progression, with drummer Chad Smith providing a snappy groove. And even when Frusciante gets busy with his chord strumming, for example, at section B, he uses a fairly clean amp tone with his Fender Stratocaster, which serves to keep the overall mix texture light and more soul/R&B-flavored than rock.

Particularly cool and effective are Frusciante's characteristically thoughtful chord voicings, especially during the song's choruses (see sections D, F and J), where he strums his open high E string along with two- and three-note triad shapes, or "grips," on the D, G and B strings. The result is a series of unusual and beautifully colorful and shimmering "cluster" voicings of Fmaj7, C, Dm(add9) and B♭add♯4. When playing these chords, let your open high E string ring and take care not to inadvertently touch it and mute it with your fretting fingers.

For his overdubbed slide guitar parts in this song (Gtrs. 2 and 3), Frusciante employed an unusual Dm7 "slack" tuning (low to high, D, A, D, F, A, C), which, like other open slide tunings, such as open G or open D, enable the guitarist to conveniently base his licks around the 12th fret and have notes on different strings ring together in a pleasing, harmonious way. Notice how the tuning offers overlapping F major (F, A, C) and D minor (D, F, A) triads on the top four strings, with the bottom two strings "safely" tuned to a D5 chord. By doing this, Frusciante made it easy to play melodies that "agree" with the underlying chord progression while ensuring that he won't hit any unwanted, "sour" notes, via sympathetic vibrations from the open lower strings or strings touched by the slide but not picked.

"COME TOGETHER"
The Beatles

ONE OF THE last great songs John Lennon wrote and recorded with the Beatles before the band's hugely disappointing breakup in early 1970, this rather dark, earthy and hauntingly soulful composition and arrangement is driven mostly by Paul McCartney's menacing melodic bass line, which kicks off the song and serves as the primary accompaniment during its verses. Lennon provided very little, if any guitar on the track, instead focusing on his vocals and letting George Harrison provide low-key rhythm guitar tracks and super-tasteful lead lines. Additionally, McCartney overdubbed a well-crafted electric piano part that filled out the accompaniment perfectly, along with Ringo Starr's exotic, "tribal" drumming.

During the song's verses (see section B), Harrison employed subtle fret-hand muting with two-note chord voicings to create *staccato articulations* that serve the groove effectively, by keeping it crisp and uncluttered. Indicated by small black dots over certain tab numbers, these staccato articulations are performed by quickly relaxing your fret hand's grip on the strings immediately after strumming them, just enough to cause the strings to break contact with the frets and stop ringing. Notice the pronounced contrast between this verse rhythm guitar part and what Harrison plays on the choruses, at sections C and G, where he strums the chords "wide open," without any muting.

During the song's interlude (section E), Harrison overdubbed two rhythmically synchronized harmony lead lines, specifically in bars 21-25 (see Gtrs. 2 and 3), for which he performs a series of perfectly in-tune bends in each part (mostly whole-step bends), adorning the held notes with impeccably executed *bend vibratos*. Notice how the vibratos in the two harmonizing single-note lines match up and lock in. By this point in his career, Harrison had obviously mastered and polished this technique, with some inspiration no doubt coming from his friend Eric Clapton. Each vibrato here is performed by partially releasing the bend from its "target pitch," by only about a quarter tone, then restoring the bend back up to the target pitch, repeating the process in a smooth, even rhythm that's quick but not too fast.

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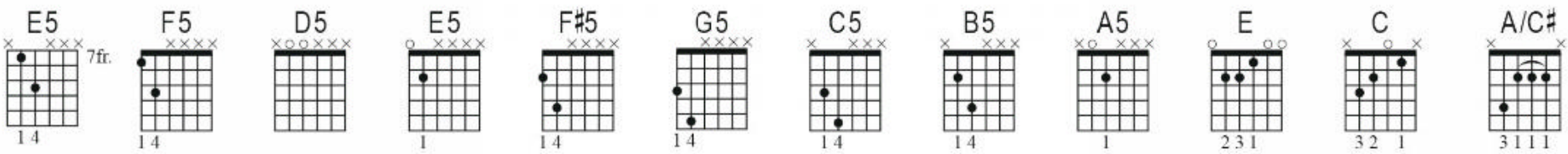
"DEAD INSIDE"

Nita Strauss

As heard on **DEAD INSIDE**

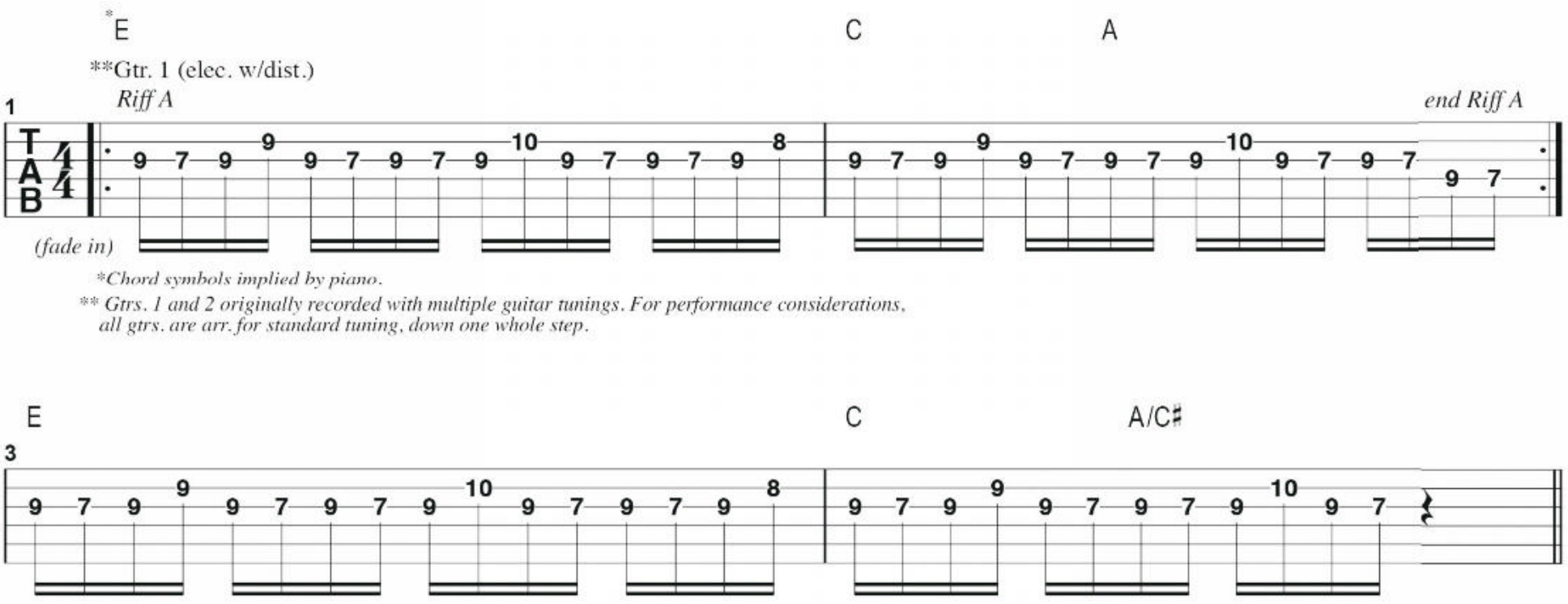
Music by NITA STRAUSS, KILE ODELL *and* DAVID DRAIMAN • *Lyrics by* DAVID DRAIMAN • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

All guitars are tuned down one whole step (low to high: D, G, C, F, A, D).
Bass is in drop-D tuning down one whole step (low to high): C, G, C, F.
All music sounds in the key of D minor, one whole step lower than written.



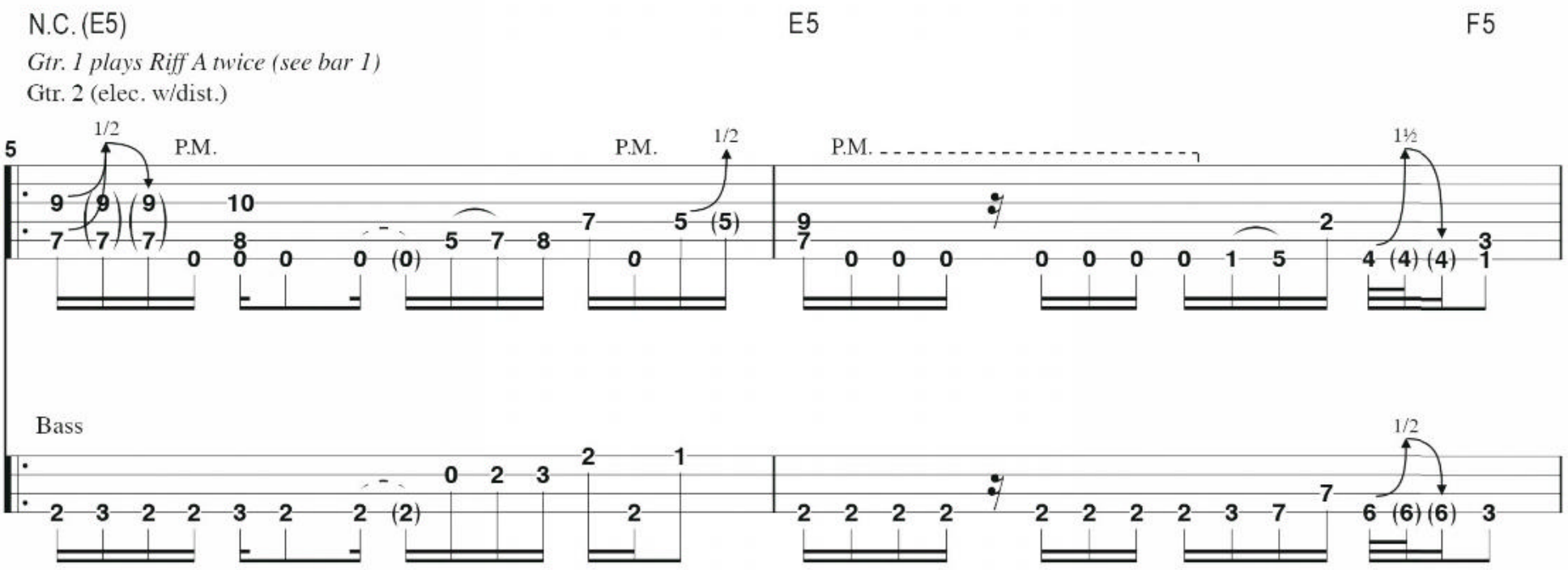
A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 87



**Chord symbols implied by piano.*
*** Gtrs. 1 and 2 originally recorded with multiple guitar tunings. For performance considerations, all gtrs. are arr. for standard tuning, down one whole step.*

B (0:17, 1:20)



"DEAD INSIDE"
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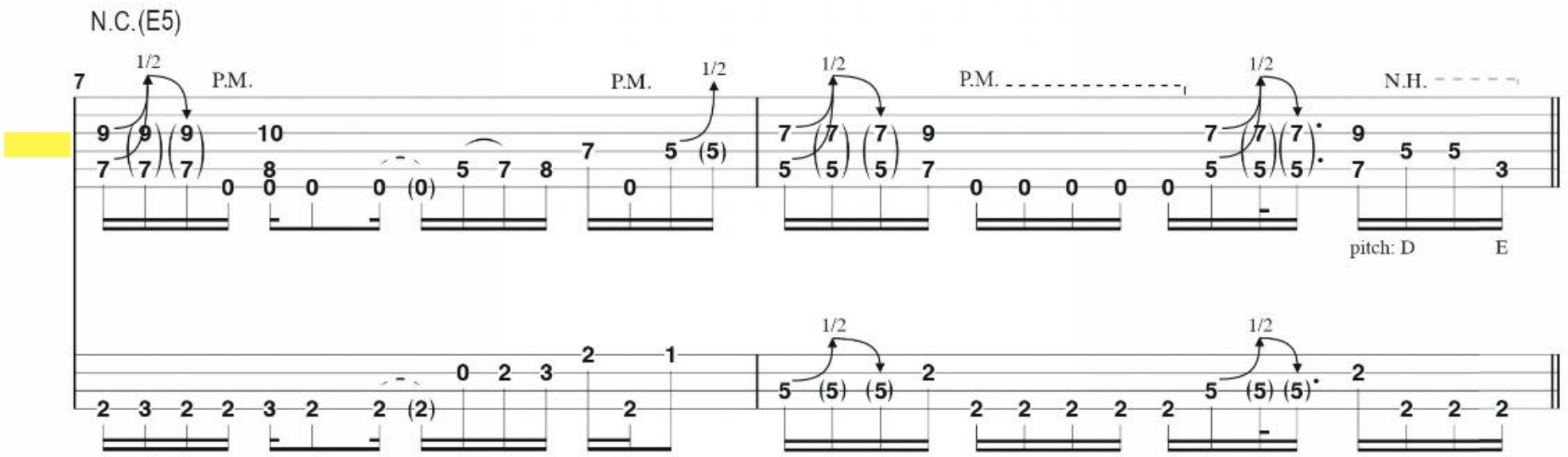
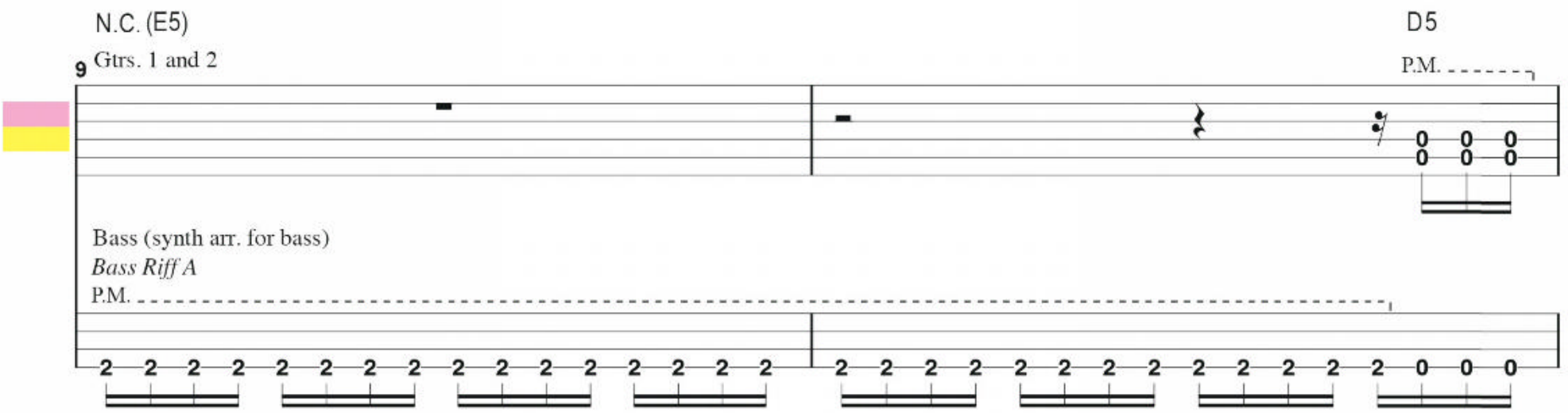
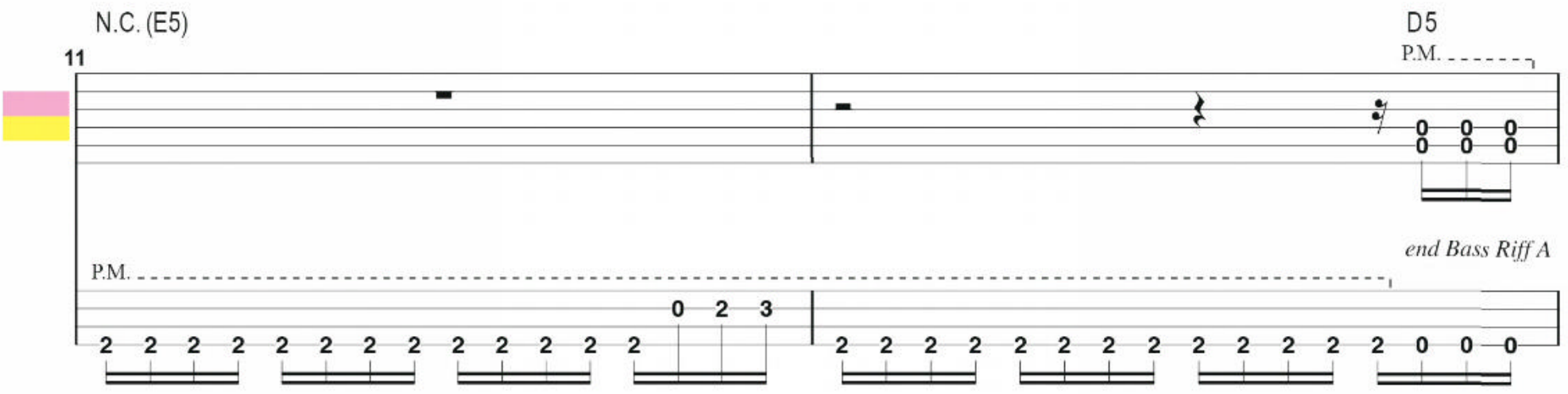


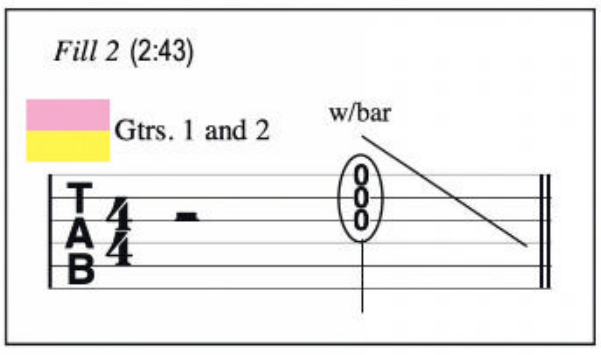
C **Verses** (0:28, 1:31)

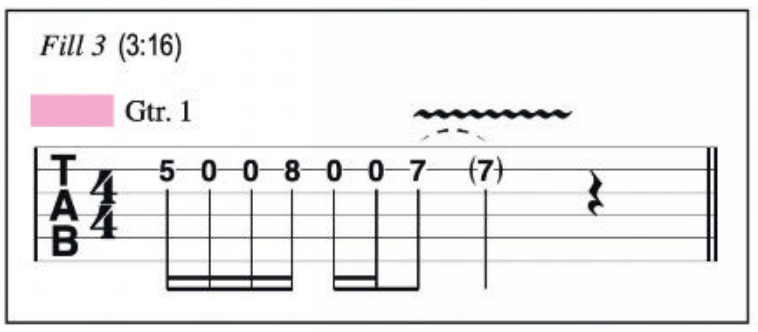
1. I see it crumbling right in front of me There's no stopping it so get that out of your mind
2. Can't handle it Collective punishment Who are these maniacs taking over our lives



you can't run from it You know you never had a choice now you'd better make your peace with it
The old strategy Destroy liberty A modern tragedy and can we be forgiven







D (0:39, 1:43)

It's unraveling Become clear to me A new terrorism taking over our lives
Swift consequence Without evidence Losing relevance Hate will keep you alive

F5 E5 D5

Gtr. 1

13 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Gtr. 2

P.M.

Synth Bass cont. w/Bass Riff A (see bar 11)

Bass

The beast's hungering It keeps ravening There's no remedy and do we even want it now
The beast's hungering It keeps ravening Have you ever thought that maybe we deserve it now

F5 E5 D5

15 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

P.M.

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:57)

E5

Gtrs. 1 and 2

w/bar -8

Bass Fill 1 (2:57)

E5

Look in my eyes And

E5 F♯5 G5 C5 B5

Gtr. 5

17

Gtr. 4

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

Bass

E **Chorus** (0:56, 1:59)

know that I am dead inside From the
know that I am dead inside From the

E5 C5 A5

Gtr. 1 w/light wah

19 *Riff B*

Gtr. 2

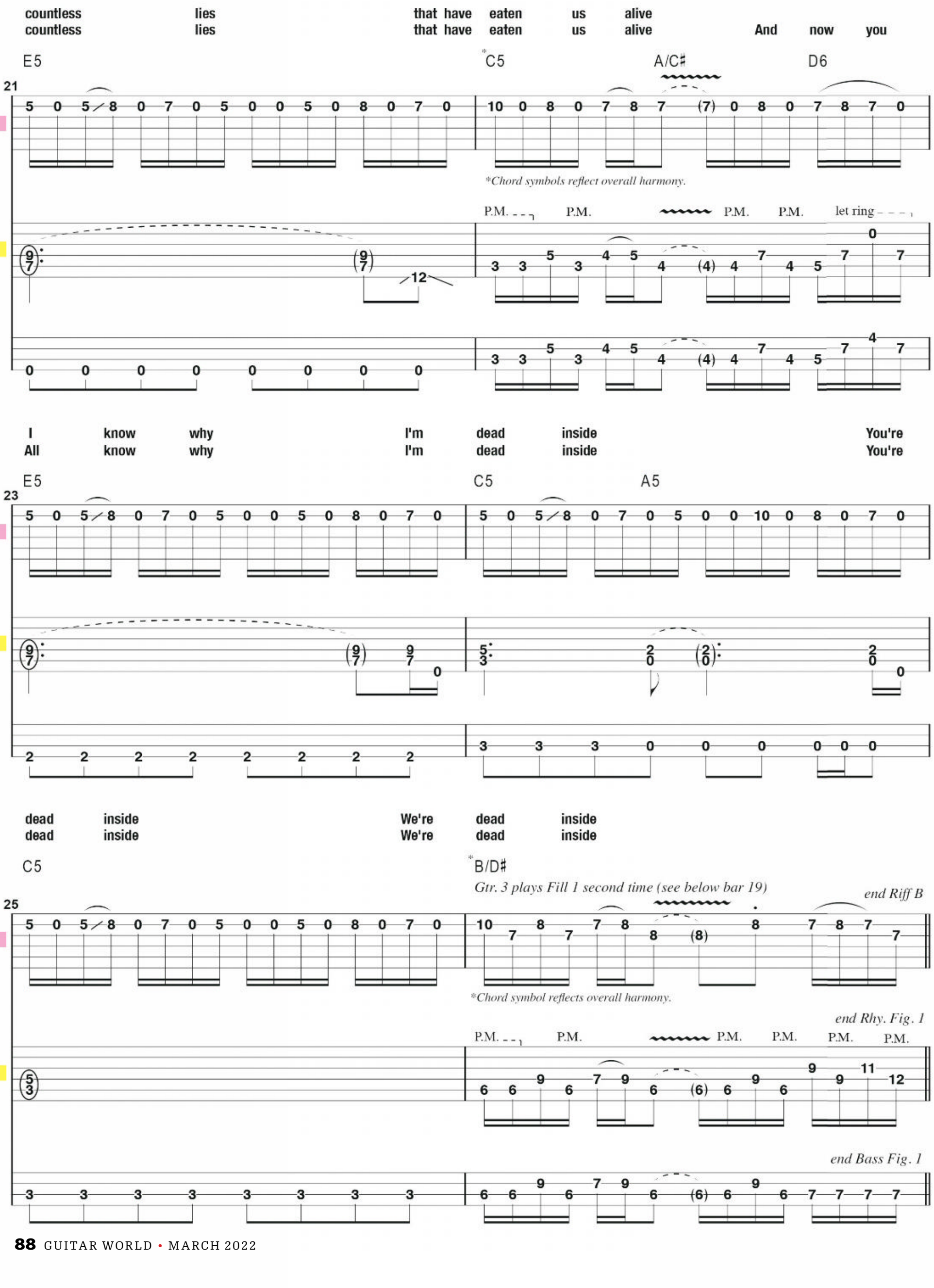
Rhy. Fig. 1

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

Fill 1 (2:18)

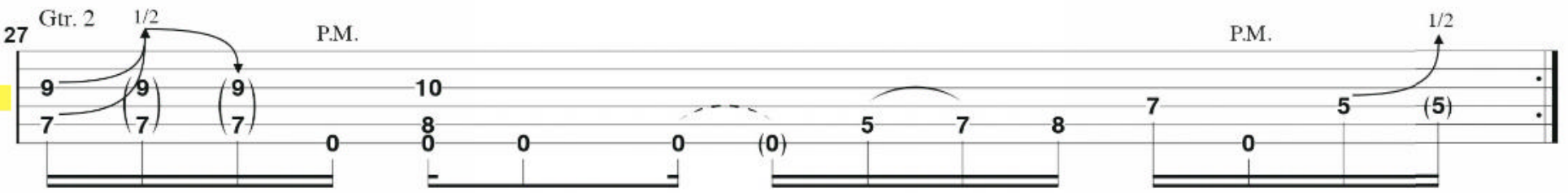
Gtr. 3


countless lies that have eaten us alive
countless lies that have eaten us alive And now you
E5
*C5
A/C♯
D6
21
*Chord symbols reflect overall harmony.
P.M.
P.M.
P.M.
P.M.
let ring
I know why I'm dead inside You're
All know why I'm dead inside You're
E5
C5
A5
23
dead inside We're dead inside
dead inside We're dead inside
C5
*B/D♯
Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 second time (see below bar 19)
end Riff B
25
*Chord symbol reflects overall harmony.
end Rhy. Fig. 1
P.M.
P.M.
P.M.
P.M.
P.M.
P.M.
end Bass Fig. 1

1., 3.

Go back to B (bar 5)

N.C. (E5)

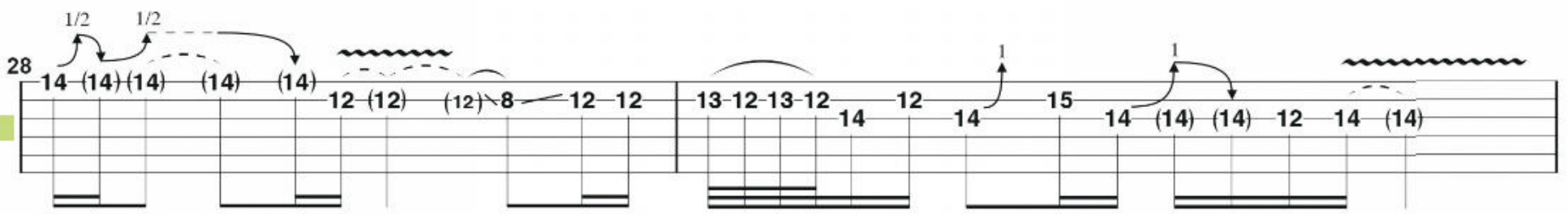


2. **F Guitar Solo** (2:21)

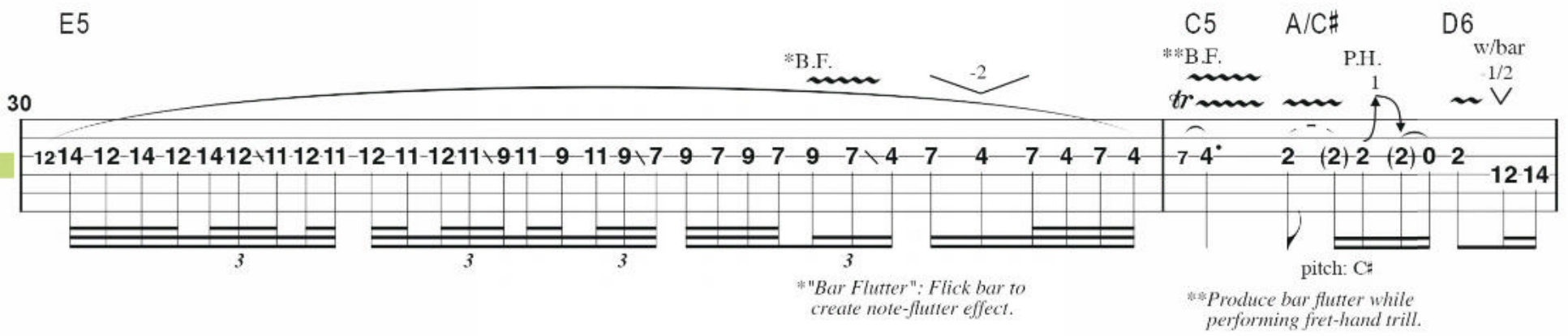
E5 C5 A5

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 19)

Gtr. 3

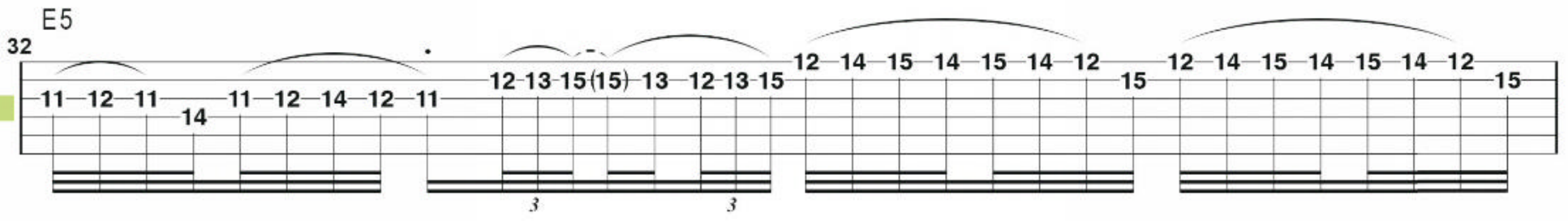


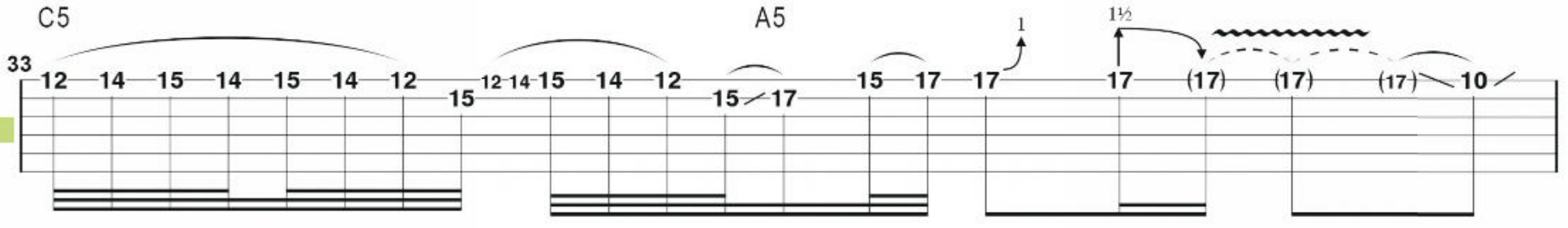
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 19)

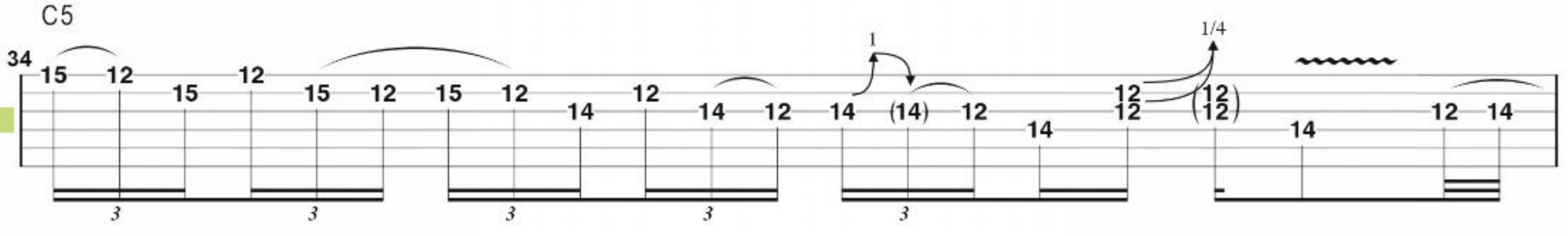


**"Bar Flutter": Flick bar to create note-flutter effect.*

***Produce bar flutter while performing fret-hand trill.*

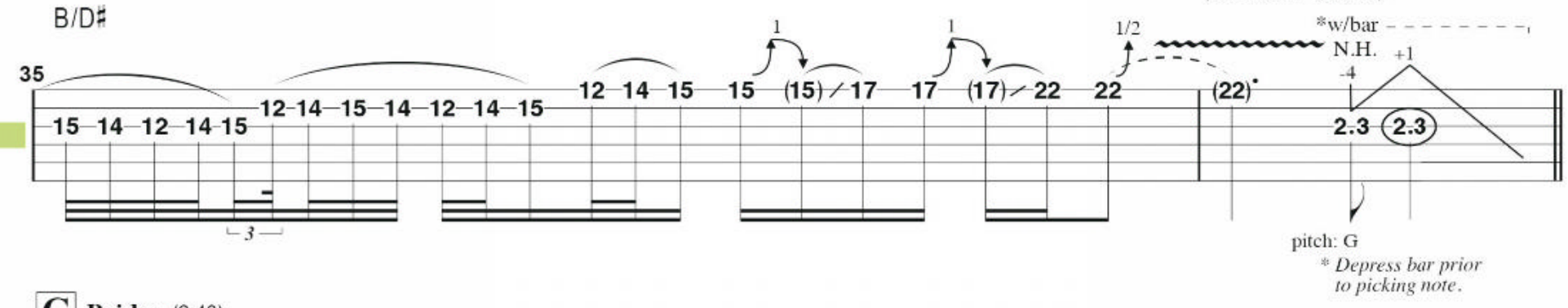






Will you bury the dead

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Fill 2 (see below bar 11)



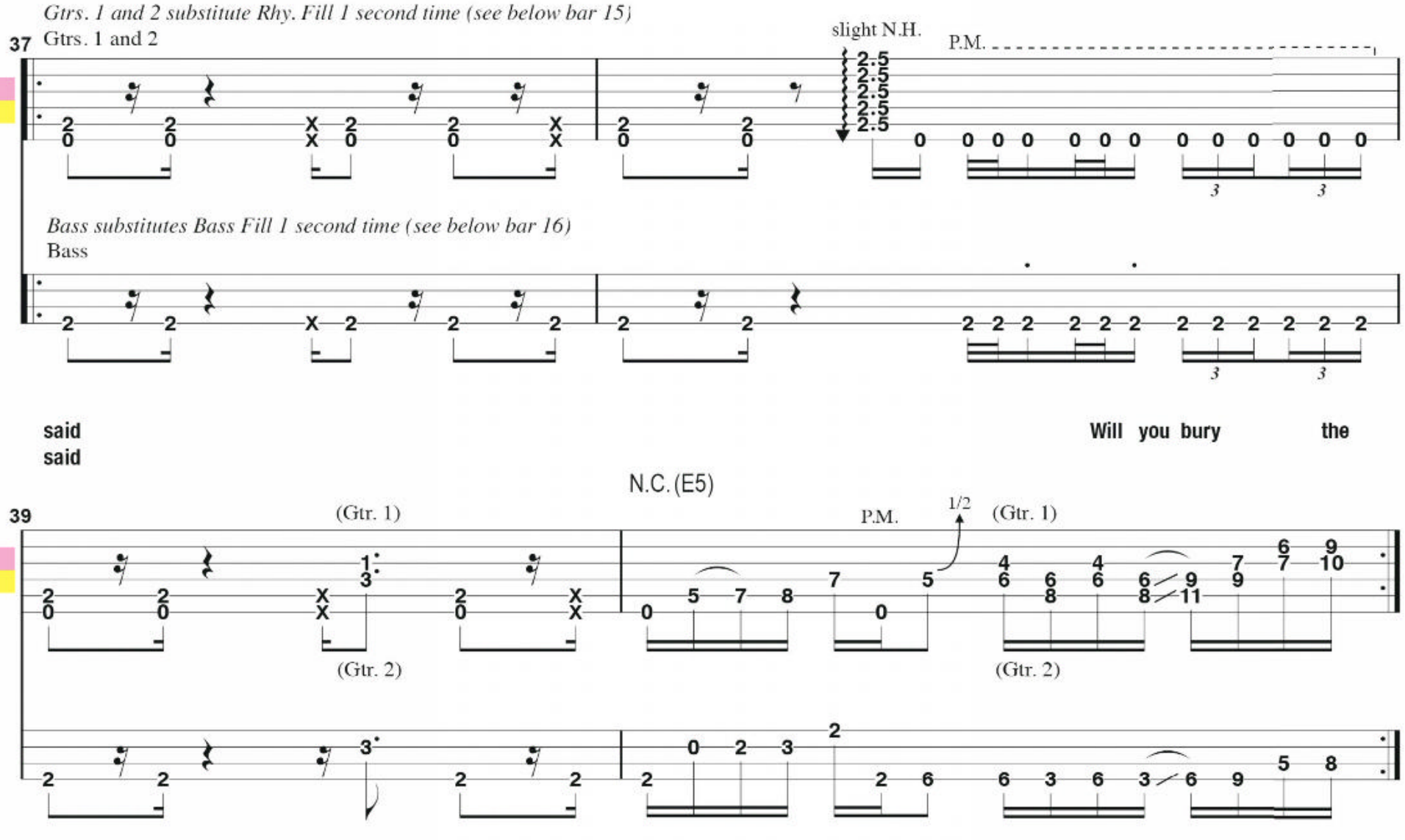
** Depress bar prior to picking note.*

G Bridge (2:46)

dead Remember Hear what I what I

E5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Rhy. Fill 1 second time (see below bar 15)



H Breakdown (3:08)

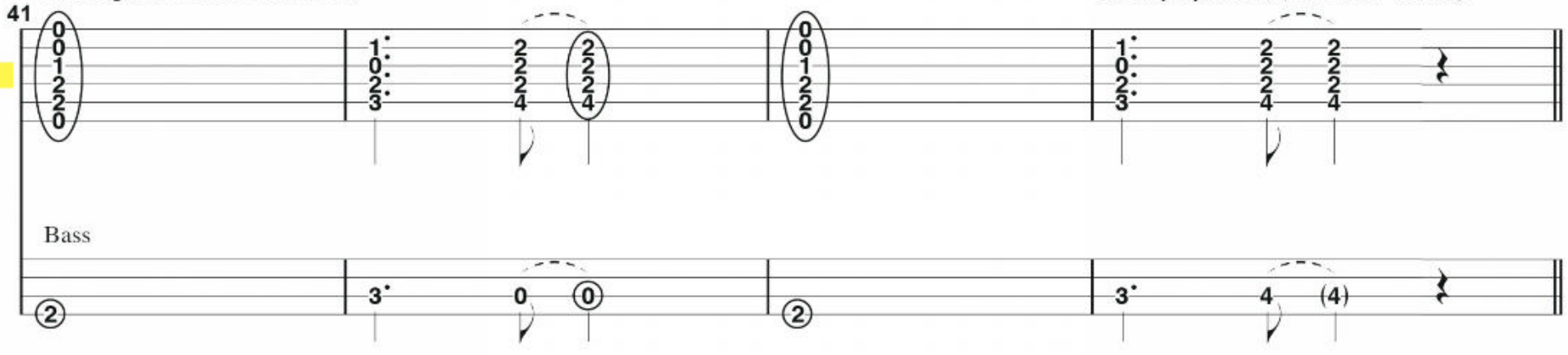
I know why I'm dead inside From the countless lies that have eaten us alive And now you

E C A/C♯ E C A/C♯

Gtr. 1 plays first bar of Riff B three times (see bar 19)

Gtr. 2 (piano arr. for clean elec.)

Gtr. 1 plays Fill 3 (see below bar 12)



I Outro (3:19)

all know why I'm dead inside You're dead inside We're dead inside And

E5 C5 A5 C5 B/D♯

Gtr. 1 plays last four bars of Riff B (see bar 23)

45 Gtr. 2

P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass plays last four bars of Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 23)

I know why I am dead inside From the countless lies That have eaten us alive And now you

(Dead inside)

E5 C5 A5 E5 C5 A/C♯ D6

Gtr. 1 plays first six bars of Riff B (see bar 19)

49

P.M. let ring

Bass plays first six bars of Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 19)

all know why I'm dead inside You're

E5 C5 A5

53 Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

dead inside We're dead inside

C5 B/D♯ E5

55 Gtr. 1

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass

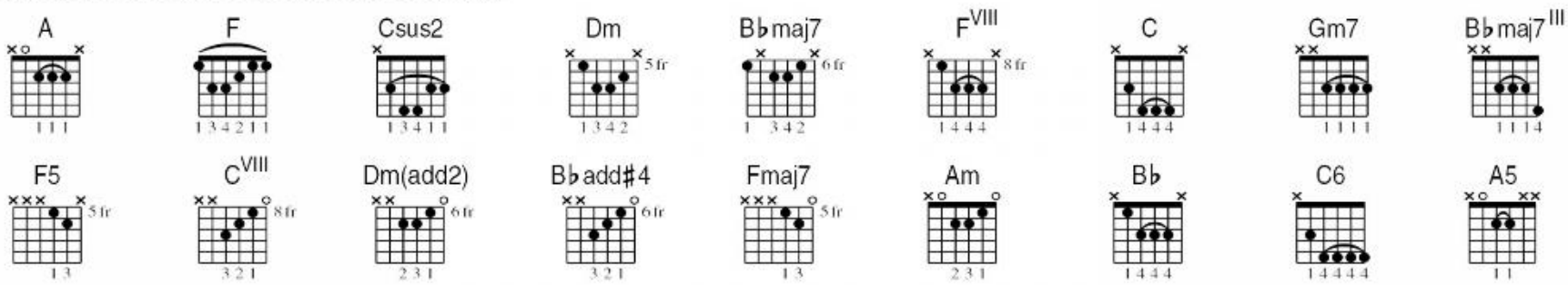
"SOUL TO SQUEEZE"

Red Hot Chili Peppers

As heard on **GREATEST HITS**

Words and Music by **ANTHONY KIEDIS, FLEA, JOHN FRUSCIANTE** *and* **CHAD SMITH** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**

Chord shapes for Gtr. 1 (standard tuning)



Gtrs. 2 and 3 are in open Dm7 tuning (low to high: D A D F A C).

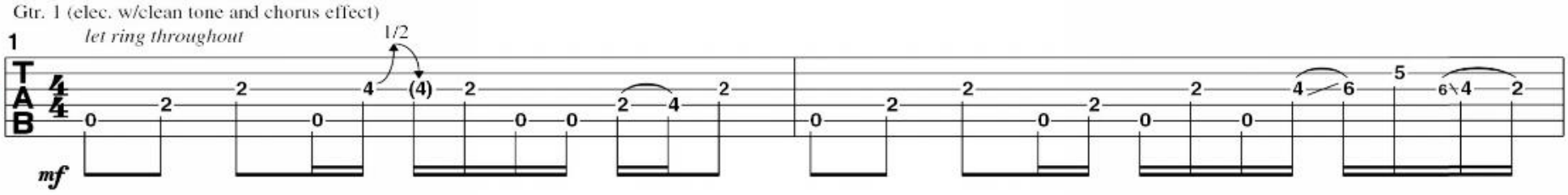
A Intro (0:00)

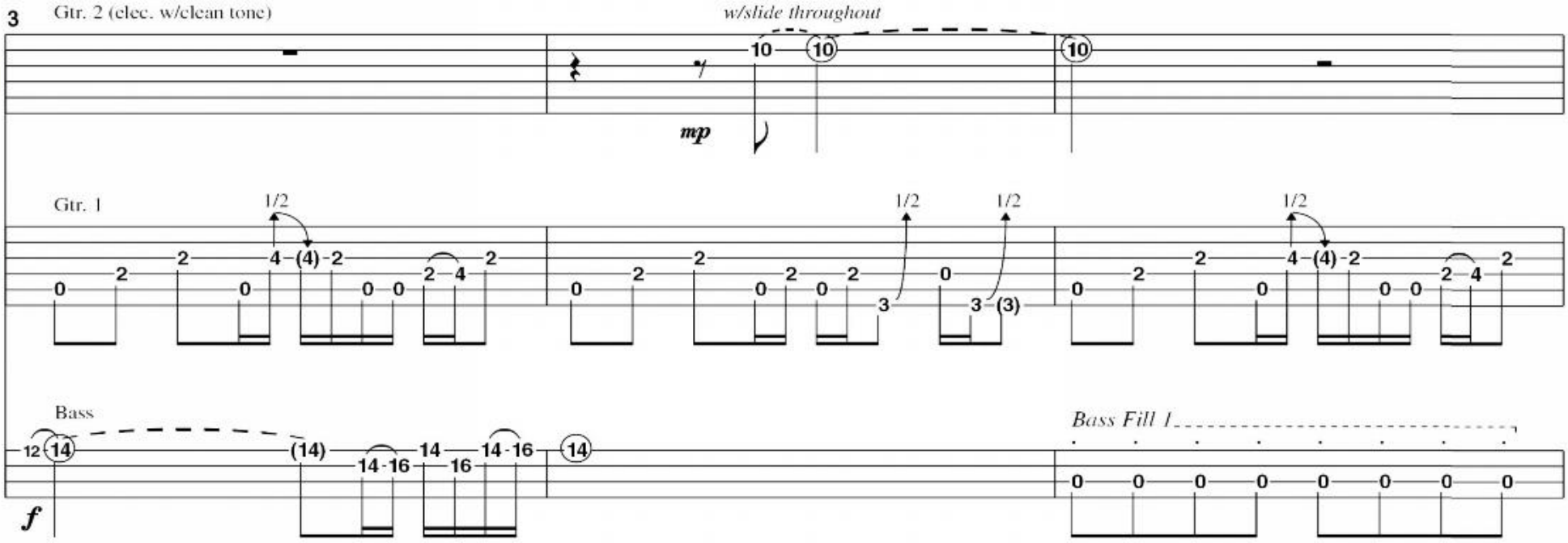
Moderate Rock ♩ = 88

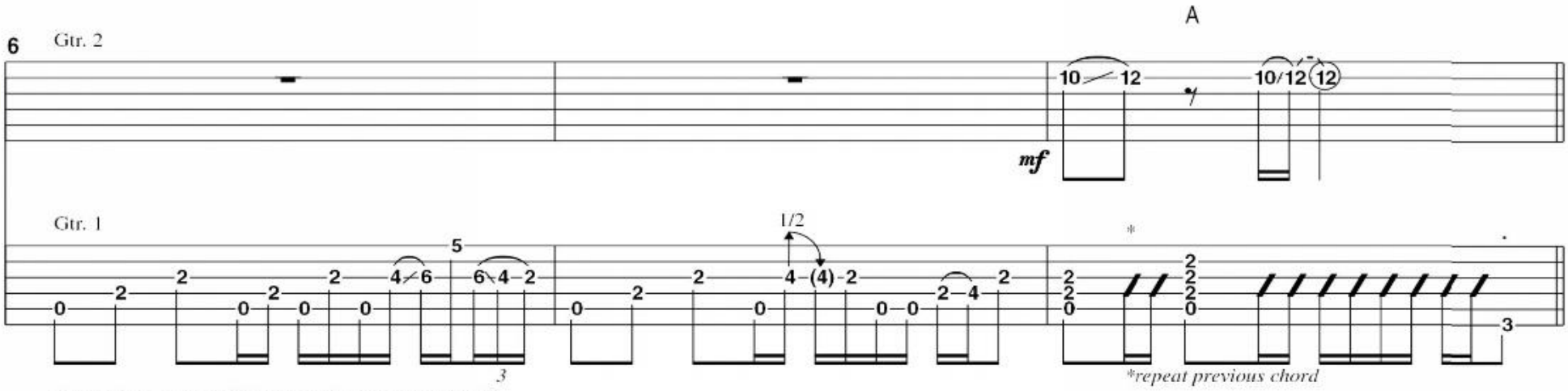
A5

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/clean tone and chorus effect)

let ring throughout







Bass plays Bass Fill 1 three times (see meas. 5)

"SOUL TO SQUEEZE"
FROM THE PARAMOUNT MOTION PICTURE *THE CONEHEADS*.
WORDS AND MUSIC BY ANTHONY KIEDIS, FLEA, JOHN FRUSCIANTE AND CHAD SMITH.
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B (0:23)

F Csus2 Dm B♭maj7 Dm F VIII C

Gtr. 2

let ring

9

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 1

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

Gm7 B♭maj7 III F Csus2 (Dm) B♭maj7

let ring

12

Dm F VIII C Gm7 B♭maj7 III

Gtr. 2

(let ring into next measure)

15

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/clean tone)

w/slide throughout

(let ring into next measure)

mf

Gtr. 1

end Rhy. Fig. 1

Bass

end Bass Fig. 1

C **1st Verse** (0:45)

Well I got a bad disease Up from my brain is where I bleed

*F C Dm B♭ Dm F C Gm B♭

17 Bass

*Chord symbols until meas. 25 reflect overall harmony implied by bass.

Insanity it seems is got me by my soul to squeeze

F C Dm B♭ Dm F C B♭

21 Gtr. 1

Bass

Bass Fig. 2

let ring

end Bass Fig. 2

Well all the love from me with all the dying trees I scream

F Csus2 Dm B♭maj7 Dm F^VIII C Gm7 B♭maj7^III

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see meas. 9)

25 Gtr. 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see meas. 9)

The angels in my dreams yeah have turned to demons of greed That's me

F Csus2 Dm B♭maj7 Dm F^VIII C Gm7 B♭maj7^III

29 *let ring*

D **1st Chorus** (1:28)

Where I go I just don't know Well I got to got to gotta take it slow

F5 C^VIII Dm(add2) B♭add♯4

33 Gtr. 1

vol. swells

Bass

When I find my peace of mind well I'm gonna give you some of my good time

Fmaj7 C^VIII Dm(add2) Am B♭

37 P.M.

E 2nd Verse (1:50)

Today love smile on me It took away my pain said please

F C Dm B♭ Dm F C Gm B♭

41 Gtr. 1

mp f

vol. swells

Gtr. 2

Bass plays first four measures of Bass Fig. 1 (see meas. 9); chord symbols until **F** *reflect overall harmony implied by bass.*

Oh let your ride be free You gotta let it be Oh yeah

F C Dm B♭ Dm F C B♭

45 Gtr. 1 P.M.

Bass

F 2nd Chorus (2:12)

Where I go I just don't know Well I got to gotta gotta take it slow

Fmaj7 C^VIII Dm(add2) B♭add♯4

49

When I find my peace of mind well I'm gonna give you some of my good time

Fmaj7 C^VIII Dm(add2) Am B♭

53

G Guitar Solo (2:34)

F C Dm B♭ Dm F C Gm B♭

57 *Gtrs. 2 and 3 (w/slide)

let ring let ring

f

**composite arrangement*

***Lower note on 4th string is unintentionally sounded by the slide (Gtr. 3).*

Bass plays first four measures of Bass Fig. 1 simile (see meas. 9); chord symbols until **H** *reflect overall harmony implied by bass.*

Yeah

F C Dm B♭ Dm F C

61 Gtrs. 2 and 3 *

let ring

*Note in parenthesis is played by Gtr. 3.

Bass

H (2:55)

Dm C6 A5

65 Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 2

end Rhy. Fig. 2

Bass

Bass Fig. 3

let ring

end Bass Fig. 3

Dm C6 A5 Dm C6 A5

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 65)

67 Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 twice (see meas. 65)

Dm C6 Am B♭

71 Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

Bass

I **3rd Verse** (3:17)

You're so polite indeed Well I got everything I need

F C Dm B♭ Dm F C Gm B♭

Gtr. 2

73

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 1

Bass plays first four measures of Bass Fig. 1 (see meas. 9); chord symbols until meas. 81 reflect overall harmony implied by bass.

Oh make my days a breeze and take away my self-destruction

F C Dm B♭ Dm F C B♭

77 Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see meas. 21)

It's bitter baby and it's very sweet I'm on a rollercoaster but I'm on my feet Take me to the river Lay me on your shore Well I'll be

F Csus2 Dm B♭maj7 Dm F C

81 Gtr. 2 *let ring*

Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see meas. 9)

comin' back baby I'll be comin' back for more Doodoo dodo dingle zing a dong bone ba dean ba da ma zumma numma con gone bad Well

Gm B♭ F Csus2 Dm B♭maj7

84

I could not forget but I went out and never said my pleasures I'm much better but I won't regret it never

Dm F VIII C Gm7 B♭maj7 III

87

18+

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J **3rd Chorus** (4:00)

Where I go I just don't know Well I got to got to gotta

Fmaj7 C^VIII Dm(add2)

89

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 3

Bass

take it slow When I find my peace of mind

B♭add♯4 Fmaj7 C^VIII

92

end Rhy. Fig. 3

well I'm gonna give you some of my good time

Dm(add2) Am B♭

95

Where I go I just don't know Well I might end up somewhere in

Fmaj7 C^VIII Dm(add2)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 simile (see meas. 89)

Gtr. 2

97

let ring

Bass

Mexico When I find my peace of mind

B♭add♯4 Fmaj7 C^VIII

100

let ring

let ring

Well I'm gonna keep it for the end of time

Dm(add2) Am B♭6 F

103 Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

Bass

"COME TOGETHER"

The Beatles

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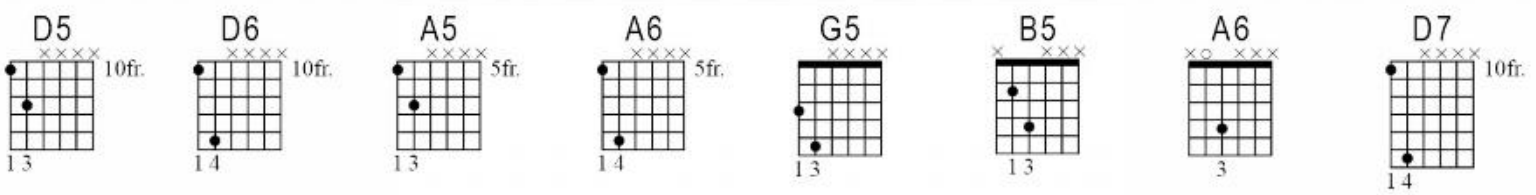
Words and Music by JOHN LENNON *and* PAUL McCARTNEY • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN



A **Intro** (0:00. 0:35, 1:15)

Moderately ♩ = 82

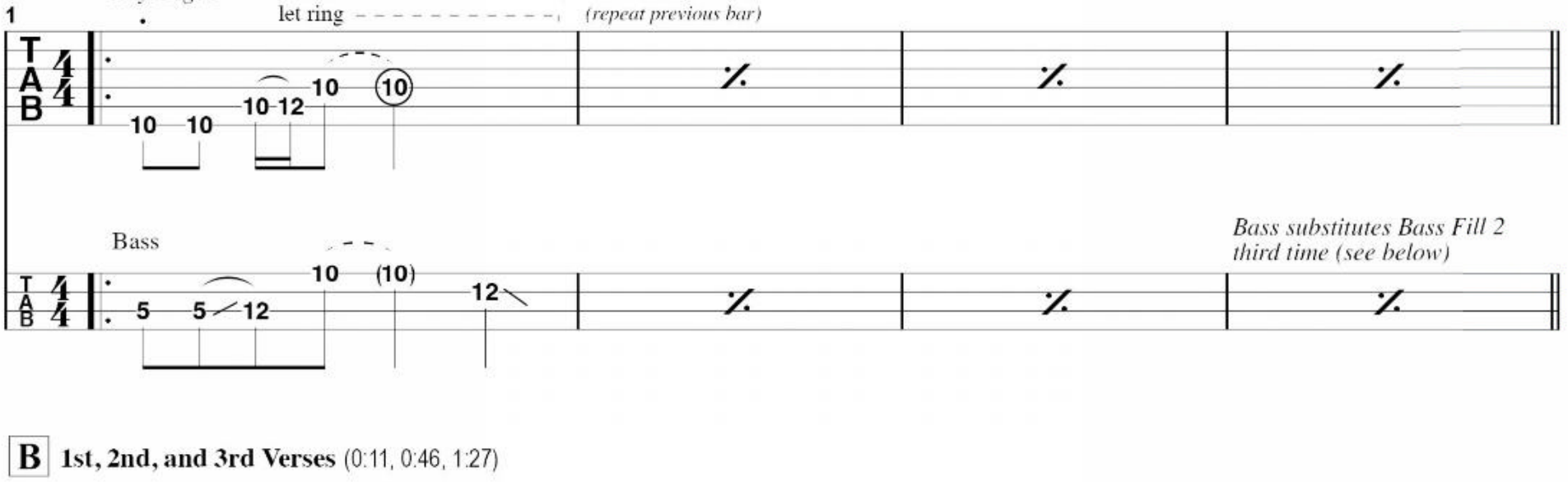
(1, 2.) **Shoot me** **Shoot me** **Shoot me** **Shoot me**
(3.) **Shoot me** **Shoot me** **Shoot me**

N.C.(Dm7)

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/light overdrive)

Rhy. Fig. 1

1 let ring *(repeat previous bar)*

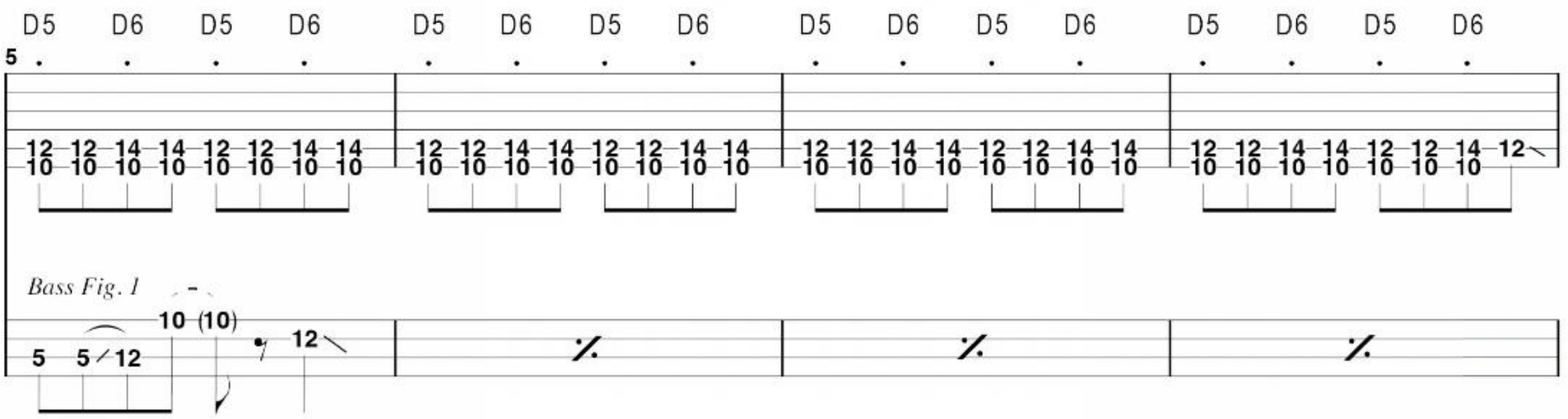


Bass

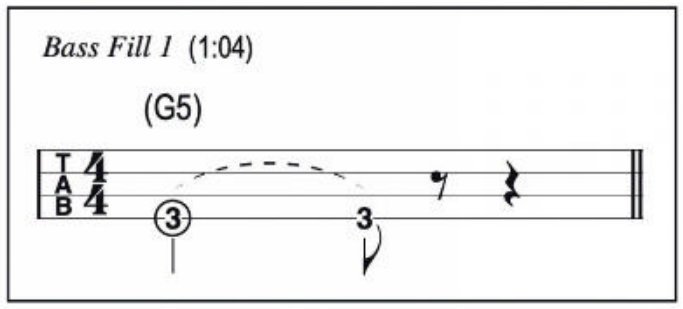
Bass substitutes Bass Fill 2 third time (see below)

B **1st, 2nd, and 3rd Verses** (0:11, 0:46, 1:27)

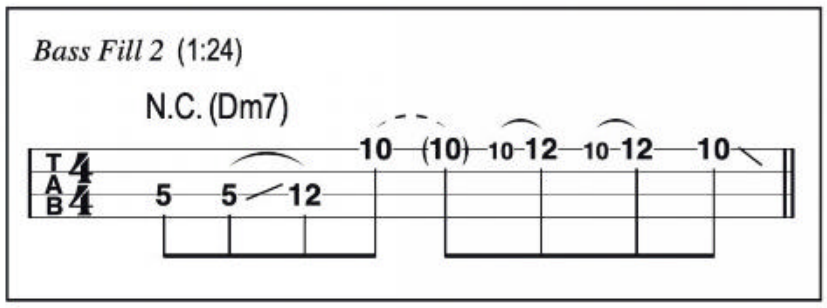
1. Here come old flat top he come groovin' up slowly He got joo joo eyeball He one holy roller He got
2. He wear no shoe shine he got toe jam football He got monkey finger He shoot Coca-Cola He say
3. He bag production He got walrus gumboot He got Ono sideboard He one spinal cracker He got



Bass Fill 1 (1:04)



Bass Fill 2 (1:24)



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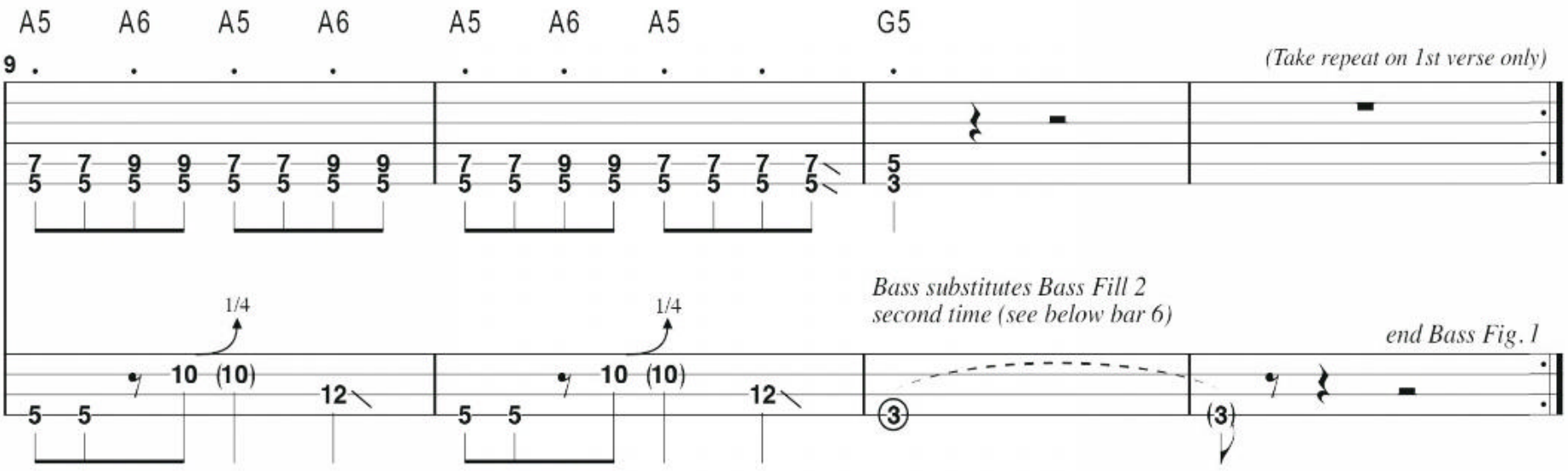
hair down to his knee
I know you You know me
feet down below his knee

Got to be a joker he just do what he please
One thing I can tell you is you got to be free Come together
Hold you in his armchair you can feel his disease Come together



C **1st and 2nd Choruses** (1:09, 1:50)

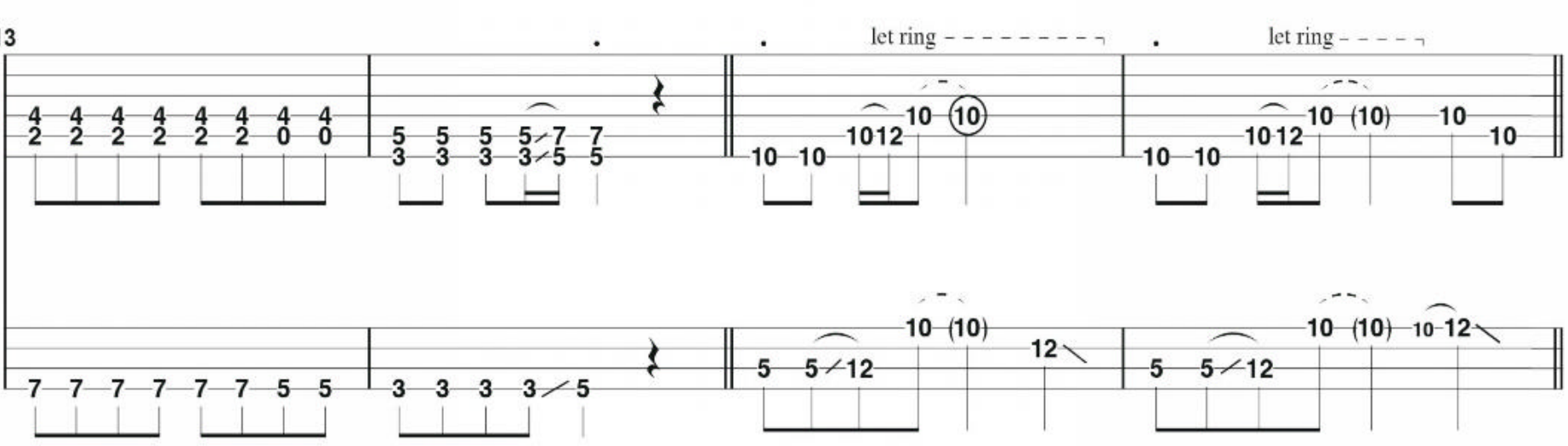
1st chorus, go back to **A** *Intro (bar 1)*

right now Over me Shoot me Right!

B5 A6 G5 A5 N.C.(Dm7)

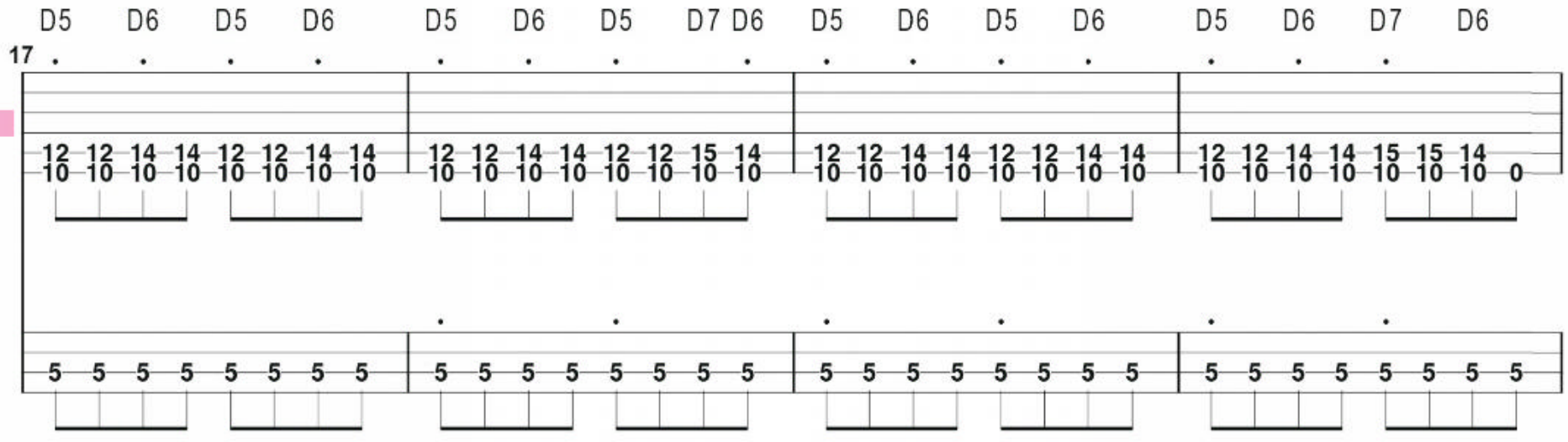
let ring

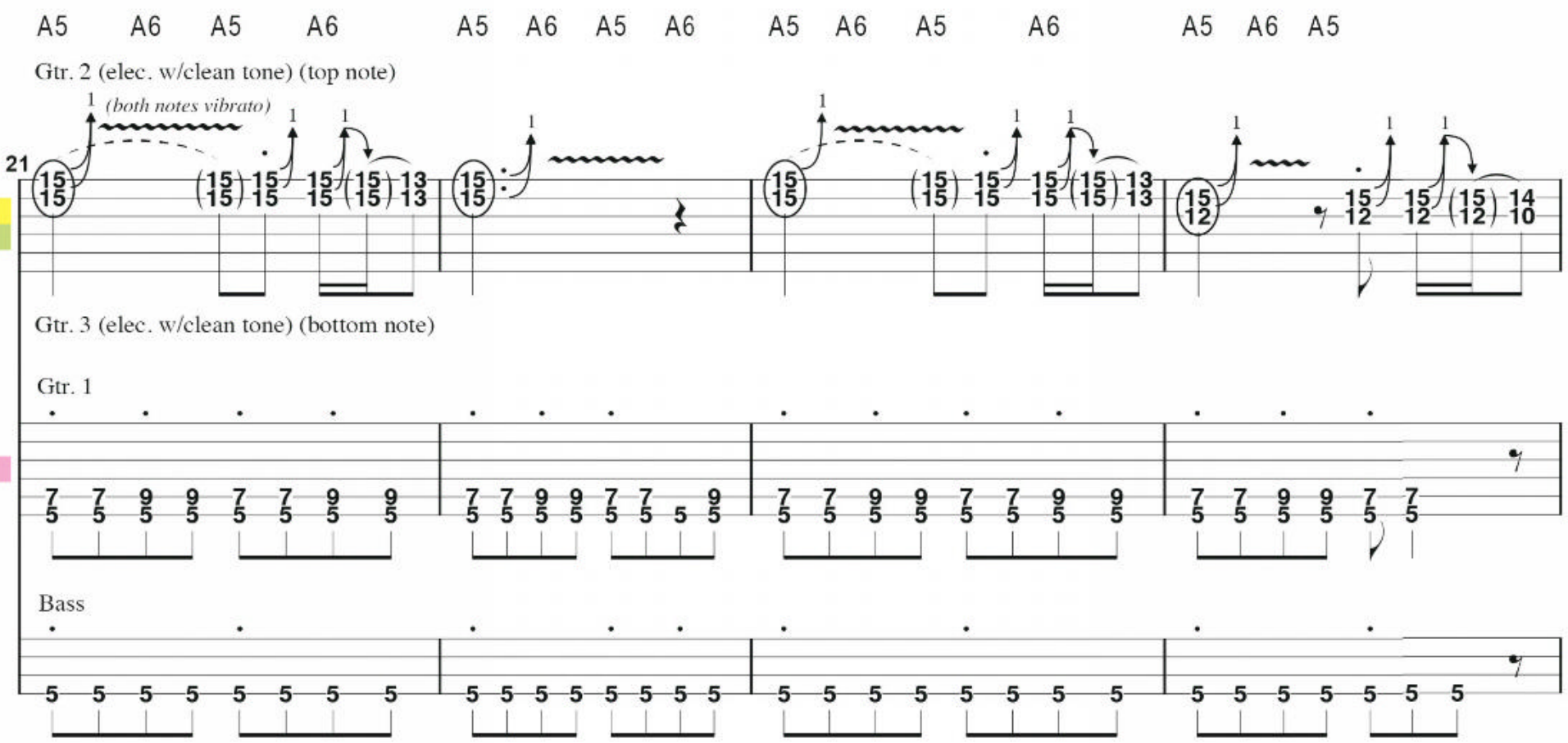
let ring



E **Interlude** (2:01)

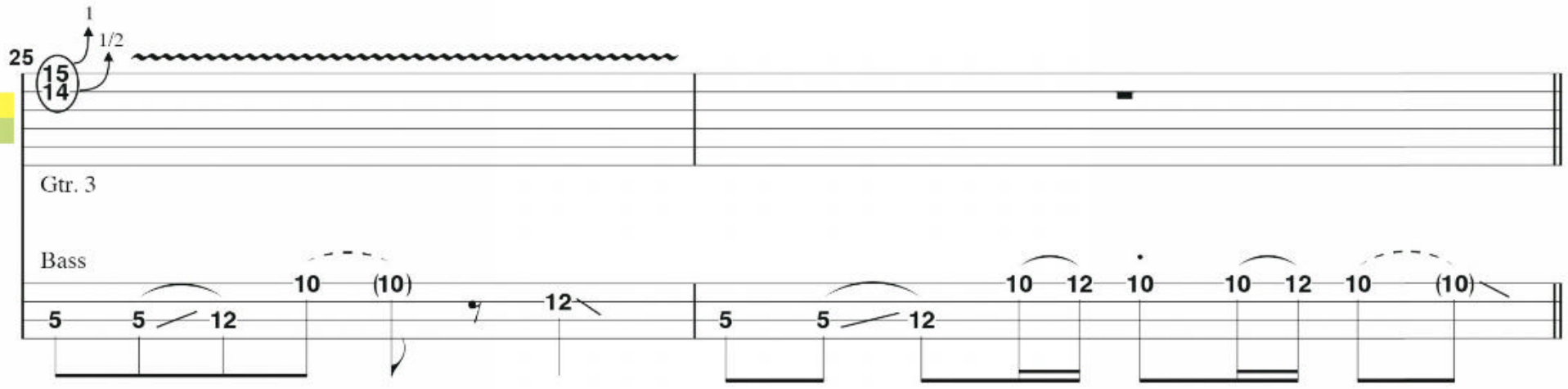
Come



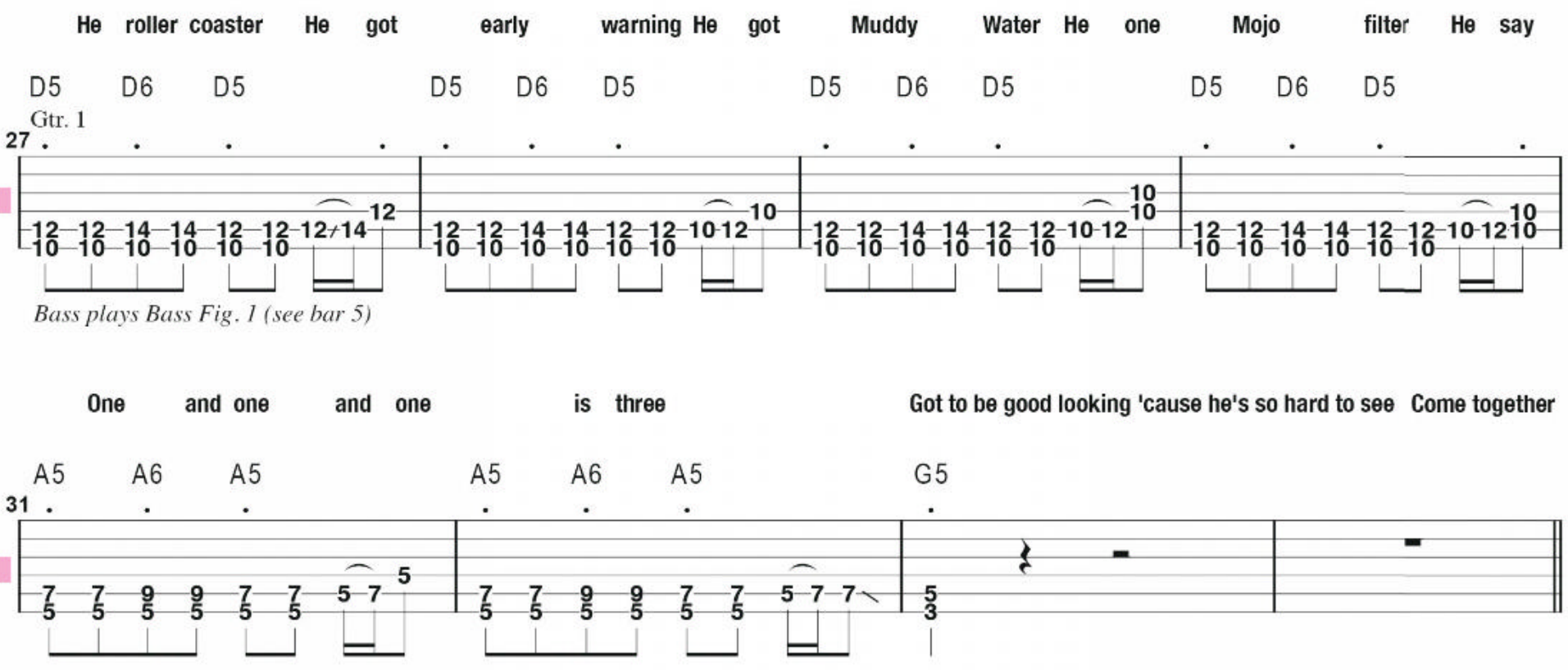


N.C. (Dm7)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 1)



F **4th Verse** (2:30)



G 3rd Chorus (2:54)

H (3:00)

right now Over me *Shoot me Shoot me Oh

B5 A6 G5 A5 N.C.(Dm7)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 four times (see bar 1)

Gtr. 1

**Gtrs. 2, 3, and 4 *(play 3 times)*

35

**Three parts arr. for one system.*

Bass

Lyric on repeats only.

I Outro (3:11)

Come together yeah

D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5

Gtr. 2

39

Gtr. 1

Bass

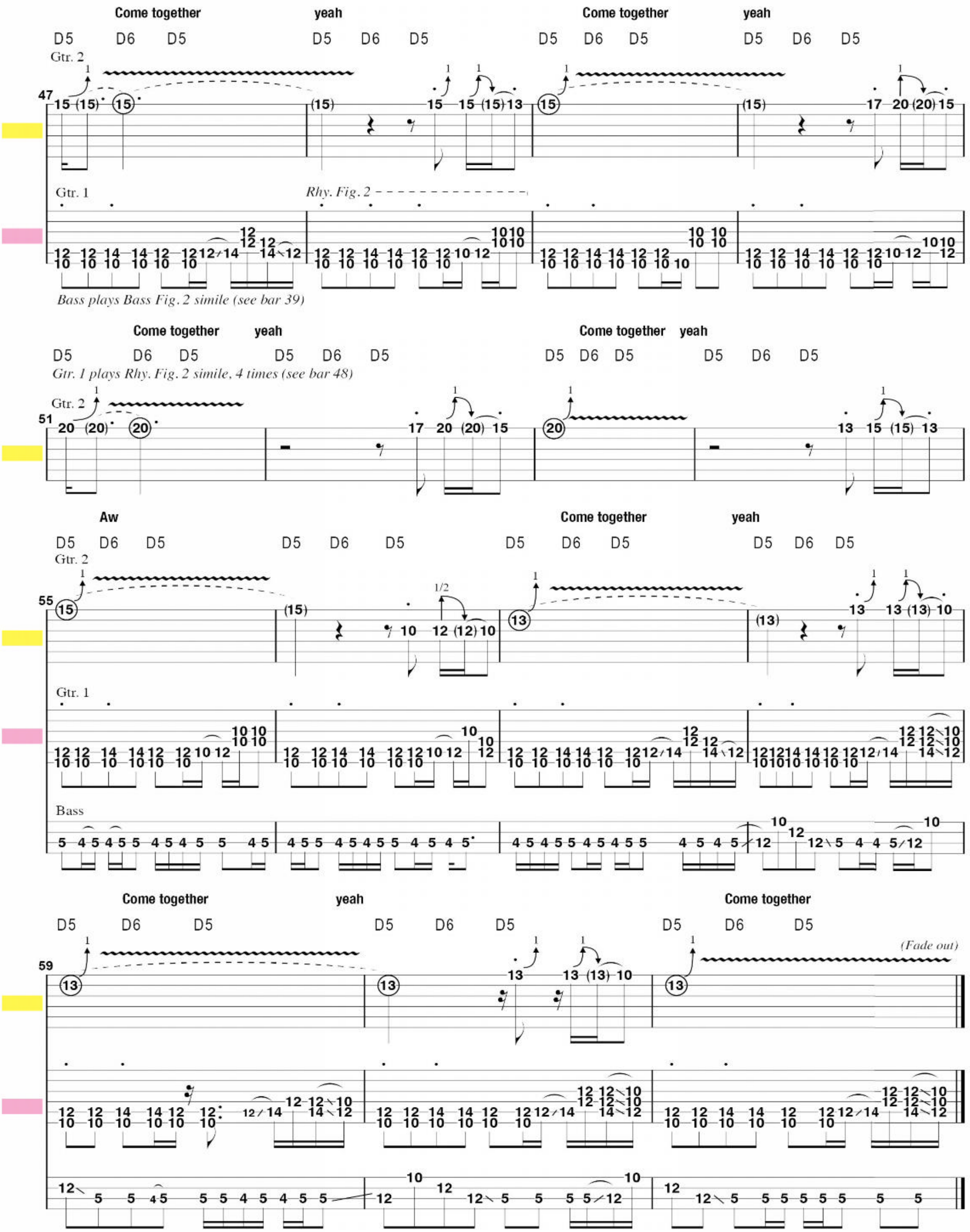
Bass Fig. 2

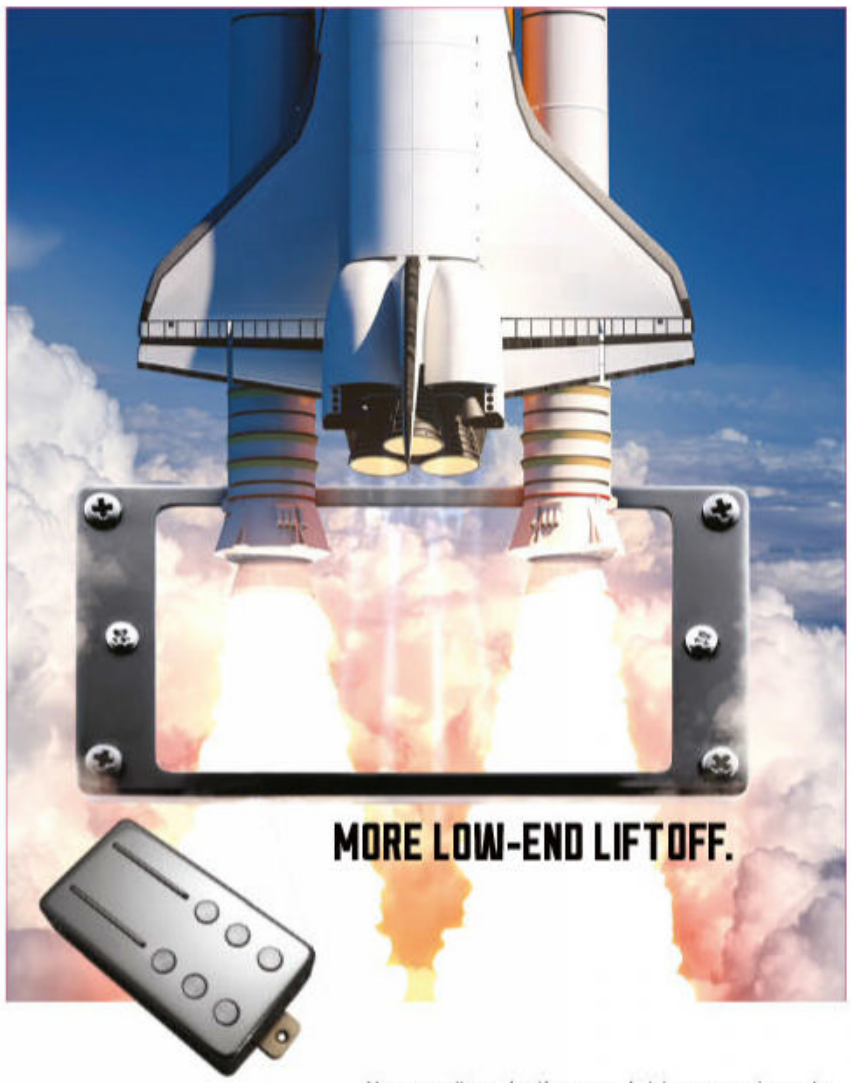
Come together yeah Come together yeah

D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5

43

end Bass Fig. 2


Come together
yeah
Come together
yeah
D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5
Gtr. 2
47
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 39)
Come together
yeah
Come together
yeah
D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile, 4 times (see bar 48)
Gtr. 2
51
Aw
Come together
yeah
D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5
Gtr. 2
55
Gtr. 1
Bass
Come together
yeah
Come together
D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5 D5 D6 D5
59
(Fade out)



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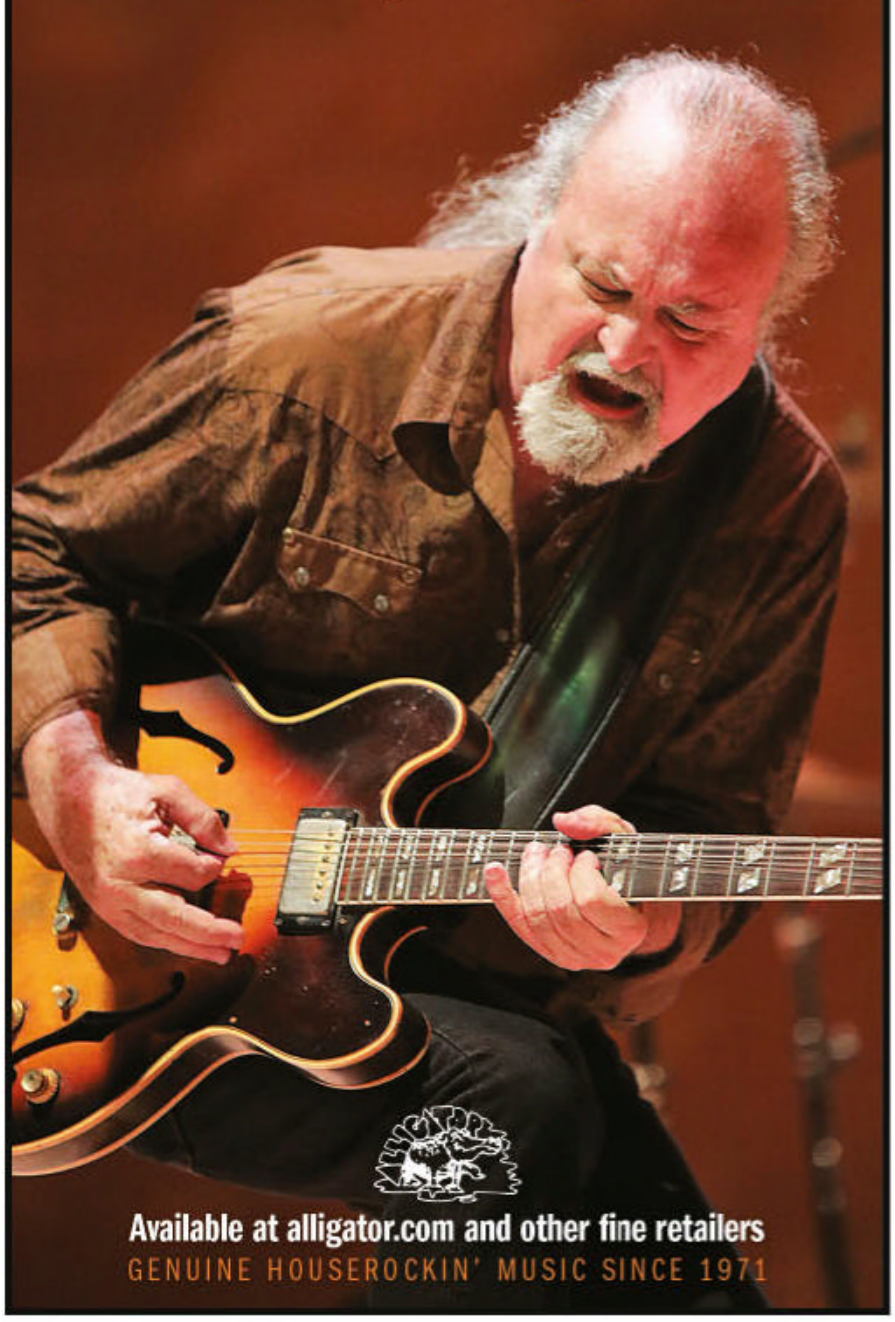

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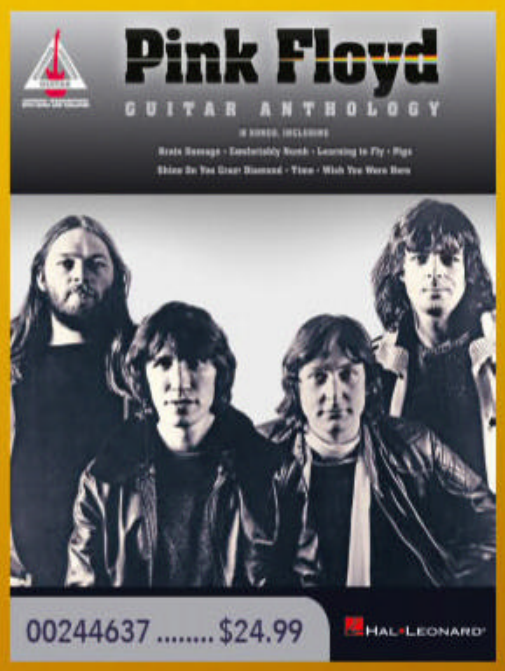

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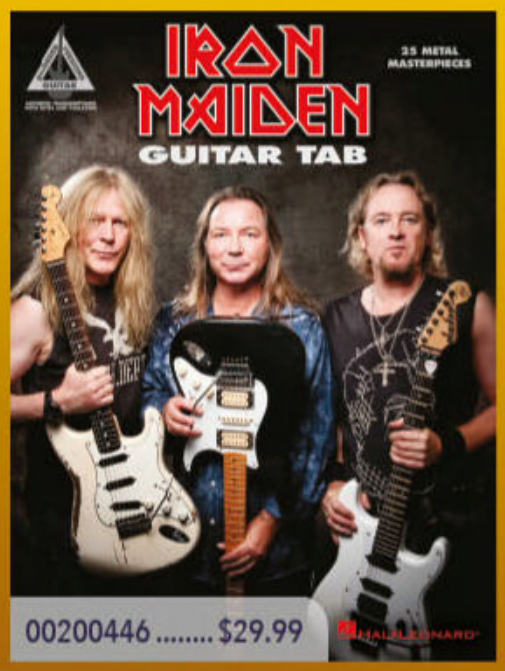

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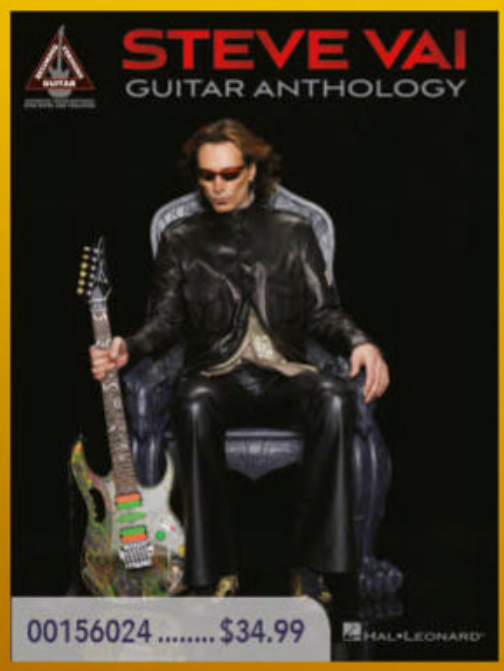

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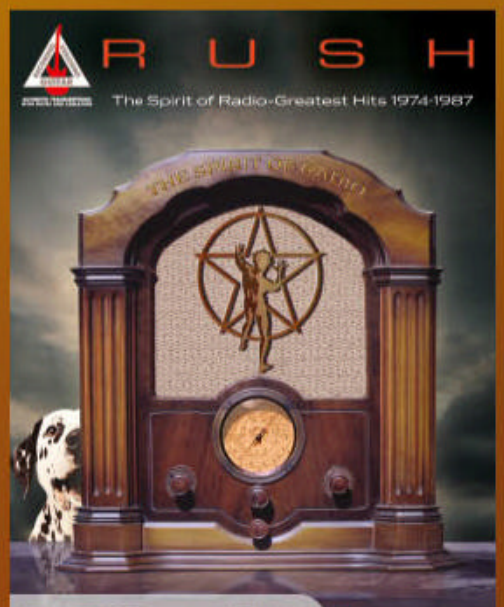

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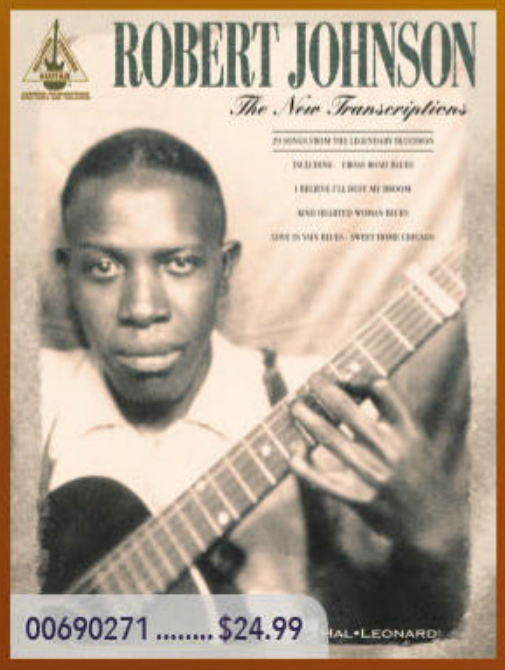

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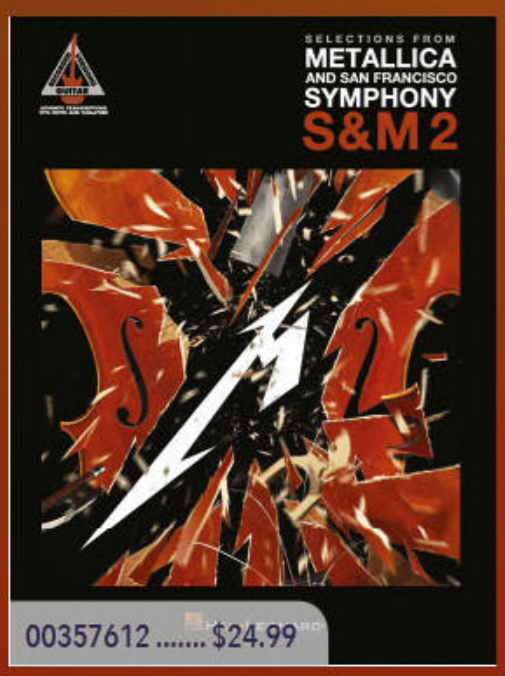

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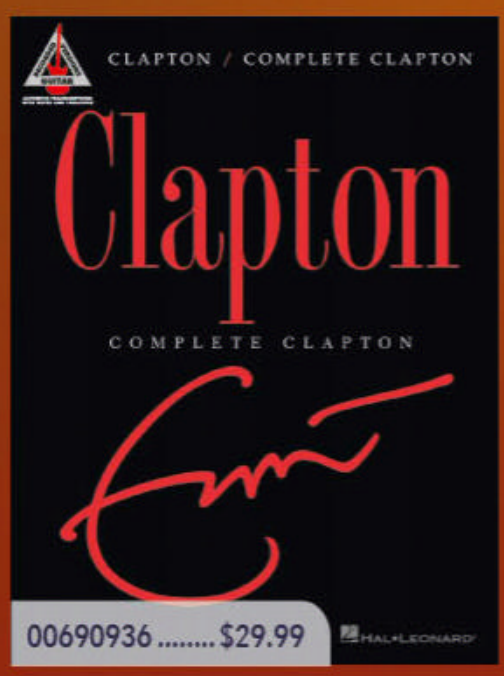

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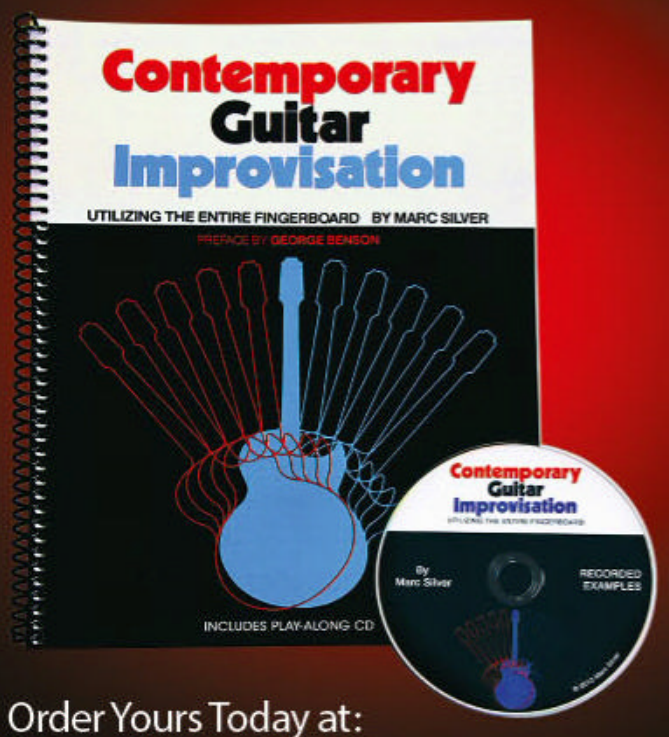

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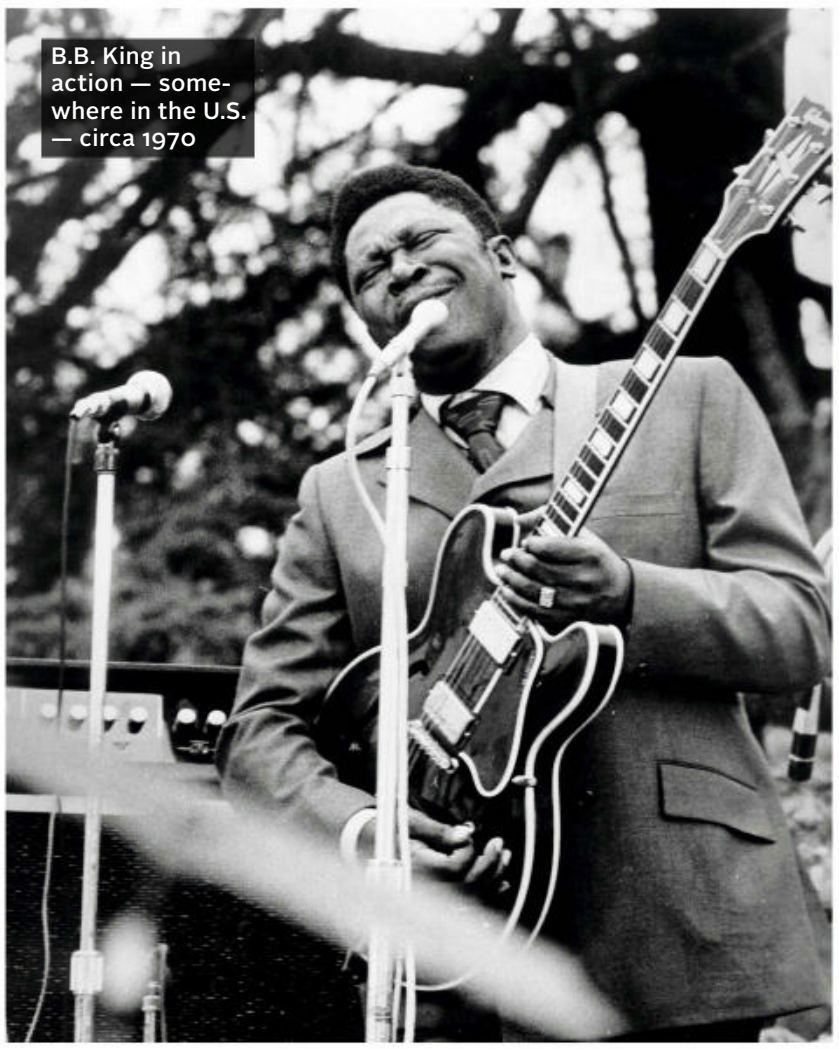
"THE THRILL IS GONE"

B.B. KING | *LIVE IN COOK COUNTY JAIL*, 1971 | GUITARIST: B.B. KING | STORY BY CHRIS GILL

I RECENTLY READ an online article that described B.B. King's tone as "warm and mellow." To me, that was the equivalent of saying Eddie Van Halen played great power chords, as it only tells a very small fraction of the story and almost completely ignores the more important details.

Yes, B.B. King's tone could sometimes be "warm" and "mellow," but more often it was bright, brilliant, aggressive, percussive, voice-like, honking and dynamic. For example, listen to any version of King's best-known song, "The Thrill Is Gone" — warm and mellow are probably the last adjectives that come to mind when one hears his punchy, metallic, biting tone.

Many blues guitar fans consider the version of "The Thrill Is Gone" that King recorded September 10, 1970, at Cook County Jail in Chicago as one of his best performances of the song. The rig King used at that gig consisted of a mid-Sixties Gibson ES-355TD-SV with a stereo Varitone circuit and Maestro Vibrola tailpiece (with the vibrato arm removed) and a Gibson LP-1 Les Paul preamp head with an LP-2 power amp/speaker cabinet — an all-solid state amp made for Gibson at the Standel factory in El Monte, California.



B.B. King in action — somewhere in the U.S. — circa 1970

Previously, King was seen using Fender tube amps, but once he started using Gibson solid state amps, they became his favored choice, as he progressed to Gibson's tube/solid state hybrid SG Systems amps (also produced by Standel) next before settling upon his all-time favorite, the Gibson-produced Lab Series L-5 solid state combo. King needed ample volume to perform onstage with as much clean headroom as possible, which is why he preferred solid state amps. He also liked the quick, percussive attack and the cut of the treble frequencies.

King also made very effective use of his Gibson 355's Varitone circuit, particularly on this song. Here he used the #2 setting with both pickups engaged. He plugged the guitar in the amp using a stereo Y cord, which sent the signal from each pickup to a separate channel. King was a master of dialing in different tones and textures by adjusting the guitar's volume and tone controls in conjunction with various Varitone settings.

Another important element of King's tone is his impeccable phrasing, particularly his forceful attack employing a heavy pick and hummingbird-like left hand vibrato. As Billy Gibbons has often mentioned, King also used lighter-gauge strings than most of his contemporaries, preferring .009s for his high E string throughout the Seventies and Eighties, although he later switched to .010s with heavy bottom strings.

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- Epiphone B.B. King Lucille
- Fender Champion 100 2x12

TONE TIP: *Use both pickups and the #2 Varitone setting on the Lucille guitar just like B.B. did, and dial back the amp's bass to emphasize midrange honk and treble cut.*

ORIGINAL GEAR

GUITAR: c. mid-Sixties Gibson ES-355TD-SV (both pickups), Bridge Volume: 10, Neck Volume: 8, Bridge Tone: 10, Neck Tone: 10, Varitone: 2

AMP: 1970 Gibson Les Paul LP-1 head (bridge pickup into Normal channel, Hi impedance input, Volume: 8, Presence: 7, Bass: 3, Treble: 6, X Over: 250Hz; neck pickup into Effects channel, Hi impedance input, Volume: 8, Presence: 7, Bass: 3, Treble: 6, X Over: 250Hz, Tremolo: 0, Vibrato: 0, Rate: 0, Reverb: 2) into Gibson Les Paul LP-2 power amp/speaker cabinet with four Eminence 12-inch speakers (model unknown) and two University 10-inch treble horns

EFFECTS: None

STRINGS/TUNING: Unknown; later in the Seventies he used Gibson 740XL .009, .011, .014, .022, .030, .036/standard

PICK: Unknown standard 351-shape (teardrop) heavy

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